

By: Lead Scientific & Conservation Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 12 September 2016

Subject: **Cockle Fishery update**

Classification Unrestricted

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**Summary:**

This report provides Members with an update on the 2016 Thames Estuary cockle fishery

**Recommendations:**

This report is for noting and approval only

**Background:**

The hydraulic dredge cockle fishery was opened by the Authority on 26 June 2016. Prior to the opening of the fishery, yield checks from each area were carried out by a vessel, processor and an officer. The proceeds from the sale of the cockles collected for yield checks were donated by the processor and fishermen to the Fishermen's Mission and amounted to £1,356.

Catch rates have been good and reports by the industry are that meat yields have also been high and show an improvement on last year. Catches of the maximum of 13.6 m<sup>3</sup> or approximately 11 tonnes were made by most vessels each trip and weather conditions have been good. There are reports from the industry regarding the presence of cockle spat (young cockles) on the grounds with multiple spawning events so far this season. The presence and extent of spat will be confirmed during the September surveys.

**1. Total Allowable Catch for 2016 Fishery**

It was agreed at the last meeting that a provisional total allowable catch (TAC) of 6160 tonnes would be allocated and that any increases or changes would be subject to survey results and discussions with license holders showing that stocks were available in other areas and that growth was good.

The allocation of fishing trips, fishing weeks and total TAC have remained the same as agreed by the licence holders and the authority in May. The cockle fishing season is due to end on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

#### Specified Landings per Specified Fishing Period

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 26 <sup>th</sup> June – 15 <sup>th</sup> July (3 weeks)        | 2 specified landings per period |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> July – 23 <sup>rd</sup> September (10 weeks)  | 3 specified landings per period |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> September – 7 <sup>th</sup> October (2 weeks) | 2 specified landings per period |

## **2. TECFO Regulations**

At the previous Authority meeting, members approved the revision of some of the regulations which apply to the areas of the TECFO. The drafted wording was passed to Defra and approved by the Minister on 4 August 2016. The revised regulations are now in force.

The Authority is asked to **APPROVE** the actions listed above.