

Agenda Item C1
Shore Report - Kent
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period April to end of August 2016

Overview

The 2016 bass regulations that came into place in January 2016 have now progressed into the next phase for anglers. Since 1st July anglers are now able to retain 1 bass measuring 42cm or more per person per day. For commercial fishermen the bass regulations remain the same as for the start of the year.

As expected, over the last five months, fishing vessels have been taking advantage of multiple fisheries in order to try to maximise their income.

There has been a steady flow of whelks being landed in the main whelking ports, with a general pause in activity seen through late July and August as the temperatures have risen.

There has been an abundance of activity occurring in other fisheries such as fishing for thornback rays and soles. Commercial fishermen have still struggled however with the quota restrictions for skates and rays.

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery was opened on the 26th June and is already more than halfway through the season.

Through May and June a great deal of work was carried out by officers and cockle fishermen alike in preparation for the opening of the cockle season with biosecurity checks, surveys and damage rate inspections in the first month of the season.

With regards to the weather conditions these have been fairly settled, although wind has been predominantly SW. The unusually high temperatures hitting at the end of June through to August have hindered some commercial fishing including the whelk fishing.

Queenborough

Queenborough continues to hold fishing vessels with various fishing methods. Potting alongside netting is the most prevalent fishing methods occurring. Some trawling activity has occurred.

There are two cockle fishing vessels working out of Queenborough with both having successfully passed biosecurity and damage rate inspections at the beginning of the season.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

Oyster dredging and processing continues to be the main stay in Faversham port, with trawling and gill netting being further methods utilised. The local fishermen are involved in processing and selling their catch locally which has resulted in them receiving a better price than fishermen in other areas within the district.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

With Whitstable being one of the most active ports within the district, there is unsurprisingly a large variety of fishing methods being applied here. These methods include potting for whelks, trawling, drifting and dredging.

Not only is there variety amongst the fleet with fishing methods, but each fishing vessels continues to use a combination of methods in order to maximise income. Trawling activity has been fairly constant but there are still concerns being voiced by the skippers regarding the numbers of sole within the estuary. Large quantities of Thornback ray are being returned due to lack of quota however stocks appear to be constantly high in this area.

Since April whelk fishing has remained relatively stable in Whitstable with a pause in activity seen at the end of July and throughout August as temperatures have risen and some skippers have shifted activity onto the cockle fishery.

There are three cockle fishing vessels working out of Whitstable and this season we have seen some rotation in skippers and crew. All vessels passed their biosecurity and damage rate inspections at the start of the season and cockles appear to be offering good yields.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 16

Herne Bay

Two commercial vessels operate out of Herne Bay focusing on potting. Herne Bay remains a consistent area for recreational activity both shore and boat. Angling competitions continue to be held out of Herne Bay and there have been large numbers of Thornback rays and dogfish being caught.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Thanet vessels have been very active this quarter with the majority of activity focused in Ramsgate. Broadstairs and Margate have had minimal commercial activity in relation.

Vessels from Broadstairs have focused on potting and netting activity with gill netting taking place from Margate.

Ramsgate fishing vessels use an array of fishing methods of which include drift and fixed nets, trawling and potting. Sole and thornback ray are the main targets but as seen through other parts of the district, stocks of thornback remain high with low quota so large quantities are being returned. Consistent catches of smoothound were seen nearer the beginning of the quarter.

April saw the end of the bass ban which was upheld through February and March. For the fixed gill netters they are now able to land 1,300kg of bass per vessel per month however this is not applicable to drift net fisheries. For all other gears the quota on bass is set to 1,000kg per vessel per month.

The whelking activity from Ramsgate has remain consistent up until the summer months (July and August) with high temperatures. For those fishing inside the 6nm limit we have seen pots being moved inshore for protection whilst whelk activity is slow. The fishery is expected to pick up again next quarter.

Recreational anglers continue to enjoy the Thanet coastline through all months this quarter with thornback ray being caught along with smoothound and bass.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 32

Deal and Walmer

Levels of effort remain consistent at Deal with vessels netting and potting. A number of vessels have been targeting lobster and crabs in the area of Deal pier. An addition to the whelk fishery has been seen with one vessel broadening their fishing methods to include this activity.

Angling effort remains high on Deal pier, with a number of clubs active in the area.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 7

Dover

Fishing effort is fairly low from this port with only a small number of vessels working on a commercial level and mainly on a part time basis.

Prince of Wales pier remains closed with the Western Docks revival project still ongoing. Recreational anglers have continued to use Admiralty pier with large quantities of mackerel being caught throughout the summer months.

There has been a lot of effort with regards to angling from the charter fishing vessels this quarter as well.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 4

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone continues to be a diverse fishery with high levels of activity. A number of vessels primarily trawl and have reported that catches were moderate but prices remain low. Vessels continue to sell fish and shellfish locally where possible.

Netting and potting activity is present from vessels in this harbour. Whelk catches have been consistent within Folkestone and Hythe Bay vessels with lobster activity also being seen.

Hythe vessels have continued to focus on netting for a variety of species. They have moved their nets much closer inshore as the season has progressed as target species have moved inshore. Here skippers are reporting moderate catches.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 15

Dungeness

Dungeness fisherman have enjoyed reasonable fishing through this quarter.

The beach is a very popular site for anglers who are now able to catch and retain 1 bass per person per day measuring 42cm or over.

The commercial fishing fleet in Dungeness has the unique advantage of being able to work in two ICES areas. Spring fishing was reported to have good offerings with activity slowing right down as the unusually hot temperatures hit between late June through to August.

Lack of quota and demersal landing obligations have been a topic frequently discussed.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

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