

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period April to end of August 2016

Overview

The spring period generally started slowly for fishing opportunities with rays and soles being late to show. By mid-May skate and rays had become prominent catches, with most boats quickly using up their skate quota. Sole seem to have been relatively scarce during this quarter which has led many boats to target smooth-hounds. This has been coupled with some recreational and charter boats reporting a perceived decrease in large smooth-hound catches.

Good weather conditions had allowed boats to travel further afield in search of early bass, cod and sole. However, most boats reported that these species remained scarce despite fishing extensively throughout the district and its further sandbanks. Thornback Rays remained prominent, making up large quantities of unwanted bycatch.

Small Bass started to show in early April and by mid-May larger fish were being landed. Vessels in Essex have been restricted in how they target bass, with this period bridging the two-phase measures introduced by the European Council at the start of 2016. For May and June, monthly quota of 1.3 ton was only available to vessels fishing bass using hook and line or fixed nets. Catches were reported low during these months but now appear to be picking up as larger bass appear nearer inshore. As we enter July, hook and line and fixed netting retain their 1 ton Bass monthly quota, with all other gears being allowed 1 ton per month.

Harwich & Walton

Fair weather has allowed a good period of fishing, with vessels reporting good catches of thornback ray. With rays in abundance and quota remaining the same, most vessels have reached their limits early each month. Trawling efforts have turned to cod and sole with catches being reported as low to fair. There has also

been a moderate effort on lobsters, however returns remain low in number and carapace size.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Thornbacks were again seen in abundance but with limited quota only selected fish were retained. Large herring have also been reported during this period, caught by drift netting, but the market remains low for these fish. Reports of cod have remained poor during this period with sole also being low in numbers. Pacific rock oysters continue to be regularly worked in Brightlingsea Harbour.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 12

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Similar quantities of herring were seen by vessels from these ports as those in Brightlingsea, Clacton and Wivenhoe. Hand gathering of wild pacific rock oysters, at low tide, continued while the native oyster fishery remained closed. Trawlers targeting cod had fair catches of codling at times, however catches of larger cod were poor. The low quota allowance for thornback rays was the limiting factor on catches from this fisheries during the period, with catches being reported as abundant. From July, vessels other than hook/line and fixed netters were permitted a 1 ton per month quota for bass which has seen fair catches of small bass.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 23

Maldon & Bradwell

Fishing effort from these ports was mostly on private grounds for oysters. Vessels harvesting pacific oysters continued to work at levels seen during the same period in 2015 with restrictions on the movement of oysters still in effect. Very low levels of drift netting for cod occurred.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

North Fambridge, Burnham-On-Crouch, Barling, Paglesham & Rochford

Fishing activity has remained low from these ports as reported in previous years. Dredging for clams in the Crouch and Roach rivers has continued throughout this period at low to fair levels of intensity. Activity was mostly centred around private

grounds for native and pacific oyster production as well as low levels of bait potting.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order area was opened on the 26th of June, with the season divided into blocks of either 2 or 3 landings per week. All licenced cockle vessels underwent annual gear and biosecurity checks before fishing commenced. Early gear testing reported yields were good, with large and abundant cockles being found in a number of areas. Vessels were landed weekly throughout this period with the per trip quota remaining at 13.6m³. Area 2b has proved to be a popular area to fish with many vessels consistently fishing there. The TECFO area will close on 7th October in accordance with the Authority's management.

The sole fishery seems to have remained poor this year with few trawlers operating in the area and those that left port operating further afield from the area. Other vessels pursued cod but as of last year, reported poor catches in the area. Low quota for thornback rays was again used entirely by all boats, resulting in high rates of thornback bycatch.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 31

Holehaven & Thurrock

Fishing effort was low from these ports, with only a small number of vessels working on a mostly part time basis. Activity from these ports continues to reduce.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

Gemma Galbraith

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer