



Agenda Item B5

By: Assistant Chief Fishery Officer & Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 29 November 2016

Subject: **PROPOSED EU BASS MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND AN UPDATE ON BASS RESEARCH AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPERTUNITES**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper will provide Members with information on the new proposed EU bass management measures for 2017 and their possible impact within the district. There will also be a short presentation from Victoria Bendall from CEFAS updating the Authority as to the current understanding of bass research and possibilities of future collaborative projects.

Recommendation:

This report is for **NOTING** only

Background

As bass is a significant international fishery, the primary bass management measures have been developed at a European level. In the current management system, the decisions are taken at the December EU Council of Ministers. In practical terms, this means that every year the Council adopts the revised TACs and quotas for each fish stock. This takes the form of a regulation which is adopted towards the end of the preceding year and updated as necessary throughout the year (e.g. the TACs and quotas for 2016 were adopted in December 2015). Draft management proposals concerning the management for bass have been released, ahead of the December council meeting. Although the proposals are just proposals and could change, they do give a good idea of the possible bass management measures in 2017.

Extracts taken from the proposed draft measures for the December Council meeting

Measures on sea bass

ICES assessment of the stock of sea bass in the Channel, Celtic Sea, Irish Sea and the southern North Sea continues to report a downward trend. However, this is not surprising, as restorative actions are expected to take between four and seven years to produce effects and to be reflected in the assessment. There is an initial indication of higher recruitment. The immediate objective of the management measures remains the same, i.e. to provide protection to spawning aggregations and to reduce as far as possible other sources of mortality. There has been a significant decrease in landings in 2015 and 2016, however, measures need to be strengthened and continued.

(Recital 7) According to scientific advice, sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in the Celtic Sea, Channel, Irish Sea and southern North Sea (ICES divisions IVb, IVc and VIIa, VIId–VIIh) remains in a perilous state and the stock continues to decline.

- The conservation actions to prohibit fishing for sea bass should therefore be maintained in ICES divisions VIIa, VIIb, VIIc, VIIg, VIIj and VIIk, with the exception of the waters within 12 nautical miles of the baseline under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.
- Spawning aggregations of sea bass should be protected with commercial catches restricted further in 2017.
- On the basis of social and economic impacts limited fisheries using hooks and lines should be permitted, while providing for a closure to protect spawning aggregations.
- Additionally, due to incidental and unavoidable bycatches of sea bass by vessels using demersal trawls and seines, such by-catches should be limited to 1 % of the weight of the total catch of marine organisms on board.
- Catches of recreational fishermen should be restricted by a monthly limit.
- Full wording is in Appendix 1

What would this mean?

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Recreational												
		Catch & release only		10 bass / month / person								
Commercial hook and line												
		Closed		10,000kg / vessel / year								
All other Commercial gears (including fixed and drift netting)	A prohibition on commercial vessels fishing for bass except for:											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demersal trawls and seines which are permitted a 1% bass by-catch. Catches not exceed 1,000kg month. 											

- This management measure could help charter boats as customers could fish for their month allowance on one trip. Discussions concerning the practicality of a 10 bass per month per person limit for the recreational sector, are currently ongoing and being fed back to Defra.
- Commercial hook and line fishery would only be open to vessels with a track record in fishing using this method, which in the KEIFCA district would be limited to a handful of vessels.
- The impact of the proposed management would be significant and effectively close the commercial bass fishery in the North Sea and Channel. This would significantly impact the earnings of a vast majority of commercial fishermen in the district

Research update

Sea Bass Workshop

On 29th September the LSCO attended a Sea Bass workshop at Cefas to discuss current research and management of bass. The workshop was also attended by another authority member (Miss S. Allison), a recreational angler, other IFCAs, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Cefas scientists and was hosted by Victoria Bendall from Cefas. An update on the research carried out by Cefas and IFREMER (in France) into bass populations was presented. The research to date highlights the movements of bass between spawning areas in the mid to western channel in winter to summer feeding grounds around the country (including the Kent and Essex IFCA district) with high site fidelity for both spawning and feeding grounds. Evidence from tagging programs showed that bass feed on herring and travel to the surface during the night to feed on herring. This would explain some of the seasonal and geographical distribution of bass in the KEIFCA district as it is similar to that of herring although questions were raised over why bass have been found to be in spawning condition in the Thames Estuary.

Each IFCA and NRW also gave an overview their current research and / or management for bass in their district, if applicable. This information has been fed into a Defra-funded gap analysis project carried out by Cefas to collate and assess existing data available and data gaps for bass in the UK and to review existing bass nursery areas. Discussions regarding future research priorities and funding were also discussed, in particular with regard to the survivability of discarded bass to inform future management i.e. whether or not an exemption from the landings obligation could be issued for bass.

Recommendation:

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Appendix 1 to Agenda item B5

PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION FIXING THE 2017 FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CERTAIN FISH STOCKS AND GROUPS OF FISH STOCKS, APPLICABLE IN UNION WATERS AND, FOR UNION FISHING VESSELS, IN CERTAIN NON-UNION WATERS. BRUSSELS, 27.10.2016. COM (2016) 698 FINAL 2016/0344 (NLE)

Article 10

Measures on Sea bass fisheries

1. It shall be prohibited for Union fishing vessels to fish for sea bass in ICES divisions VIIb, VIIc, VIIj and VIIk, as well as in the waters of ICES divisions VIIa and VIIg that are more than 12 nautical miles from the baseline under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. It shall be prohibited for Union fishing vessels to retain on board, tranship, relocate or land sea bass caught in that area.

2. It shall be prohibited for Union fishing vessels to fish for sea bass and to retain on board, relocate, tranship or land sea bass caught in the following areas:

(a) ICES divisions IVb, IVc, VIId, VIIe, VIIf and VIIh;

(b) waters within 12 nautical miles from baseline under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom in ICES divisions VIIa and VIIg. By derogation from the first subparagraph, the following measures shall apply in the areas referred to in that subparagraph:

(a) a Union fishing vessel deploying demersal trawls and seines³⁰ may retain onboard catches of sea bass that do not exceed 1 % of the weight of the total catches of marine organisms on board in any single day. The catches of sea bass retained on board by a Union fishing vessel on the basis of this derogation may not exceed 1 tonne per month;

(b) in January 2017 and from 1 April to 31 December 2017, Union fishing vessels using hooks and lines³¹, may fish for sea bass and retain on board, relocate, tranship or land sea bass caught in that area not exceeding 10 tonnes per vessel per year. This derogation shall apply only to Union fishing vessels that have recorded catches of sea bass using hooks and lines from 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2016.

4. The catch limits set in paragraph 2 shall not be transferable between vessels. Member States shall report to the Commission catches of sea bass per type of gear not later than 20 days after the end of each month.

5. In January 2017 and from 1 April to 31 December 2017 in recreational fisheries in ICES divisions IVb, IVc, VIIa and from VIId to VIIk, a maximum of 10 fish per fisherman may be retained each month.

6. From 1 February to 31 March 2016 in recreational fisheries in ICES divisions IVb, IVc, VIIa and from VIId to VIIk, only catch-and-release fishing for sea bass, including from shore, shall be allowed. During this period, it shall be prohibited to retain on board, relocate, tranship or land sea bass caught in that area.