

Shore Report - Essex

Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period September to November 2017

GENERAL SITUATION

This quarter typically sees the transition from the summer fisheries such as sole to the winter species such as cod. However, due to an unusually mild autumn, catches and quotas of species usually targeted in summer have remained relatively high with considerable landings of sole and skate throughout this period. In contrast, cod have yet again failed to show in sufficient numbers for a profitable fishery, a trend which has been observed for the last two winters. Herring has been generally abundant but under targeted. As temperatures have declined so have catches of crab and lobster, while whelk vessels have started to deploy their pots again. The beginning of this quarter also saw the seasonal close of the TECFO cockle fishery and a successful opening of the permitted cockle fishery for the first time since 2014.

HARWICH & WALTON

Most activity from this port focuses on potting. Due to unseasonably mild weather, lobsters in the area have remained active throughout the quarter, resulting in reasonable crab and lobster landings much later into the season than usually anticipated. The market for crab is currently poor, so lobsters remain the most profitable fishing target. Trawlers have maintained reasonable effort on sole and skate for the majority of the quarter, with catches only starting to tail off halfway through November. Despite abundant herring in the area, few boats have targeted this species due to low market prices. However a handful of fishermen have been netting for small amounts of herring for private sale.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 19

BRIGHTLINGSEA, WIVENHOE, CLACTON

Fishing effort has remained steady in these ports, with most vessels focus on trawling, and to a lesser extent, netting. As in summer, sole has remained a popular target species with steady catches and a decent quota of 3.5 ton for the quarter. Similarly, reasonable catches of skate have continued despite the time of year, accompanied by an increase in quota from 450kg in September to 2 ton in November. There have also been reports of reasonable numbers of codling in trawls, which fishermen hope will remain in the district to grow by the end of the

next quarter. The small number of whelk fishermen have started to deploy pots from these ports, whereas lobster potting effort has decreased.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 13

WEST MERSEA & TOLLESBURY

Trawlers and netters have continued to fish for sole and skate, with occasional sizable bass also being landed in trawls alongside numerous whiting. Sizeable cod have still not shown in the area, with catches restricted to a handful of fish in recent landings. A few netters have turned their effort from sole to herring as temperatures dropped towards the end of the quarter. Potting effort has started to slow, matching the overall trend for a reduction in effort for the majority of vessels in these ports as winter draws closer.

Hand gathering of wild pacific rock oysters continues as a lucrative fishery at low tide, although the native oyster fishery remains closed in public grounds. Tollesbury Marina has been quiet this quarter, with activity continuing to decrease as most boat operate out of West Mersea instead.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

MALDON & BRADWELL

There has been no reported commercial fishing activity from Maldon during this quarter, and as there are only two commercial vessels working out of Bradwell marina, effort is low for these ports overall. Fishing has focused on netting for sole, whiting and gurnard, and to some extent potting for bait.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

NORTH FAMBRIDGE, BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH, BARLING, PAGLESHAM & ROCHFORD

Trawling from these ports has declined due to the Essex Estuaries bottom trawling byelaw being introduced this quarter. Therefore activity is now mostly centred on private grounds for native and pacific oysters, as the native oyster fishery in public grounds remains closed. There are also very low levels of netting in the rivers, targeting herring and whiting. Dredging for clams continues in the Crouch and Roach at low levels and bait potting also occurs in the in the area.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 7

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA & LEIGH-ON-SEA

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order was closed on 13th October this year, with the final week allowing two landings from area 6. Vessels took an increasingly longer time to complete the allocated two trips per week towards the end of the season as stocks on the traditional cockle grounds declined after a full summer's fishing. The permitted cockle fishery was also opened for the first time since 2014, with one trip allocated to each permit holder for Area 7. A total of 25 vessels took part in the permitted fishery, with the majority of vessels filling up with the maximum 13.6 m³ of cockles. Few other fishing vessels have

regularly gone to sea this quarter. Although herring have been abundant they have been hardly targeted.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 16

HOLEHAVEN & THURROCK

Fishing effort remains low and in decline from Holehaven and Thurrock. Vessels operate only on a part time basis with trips out working now very infrequent as winter weather closes in for the end of the year.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

Hayden Hurst

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex