

Agenda Item - C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period January 2018 to May 2018

Overview

Poor weather conditions in January through to March limited fishing opportunities, with cod making a late appearance. Herring shoals did occur in the district and were exploited by a number of vessels, however low prices meant effort was minimal. Larger fish remained scarce for the entire winter season along the Essex coast.

Sole catches had a slow start in this period due to the colder water temperatures. Bass compliance direction from the MMO was ongoing within this period, with no bass to be retained during February or March 2018 by any vessel, and no bass to be retained by recreational fisherman by shore or boat for the whole of 2018. Vessels demonstrating a track record were granted authorisation to retain bass as bycatch in trawls and fixed nets, or targeted by long lining from April onwards, in accordance with the catch allowance limits. Efforts increased for thornback rays due to improved quota allowance. The overall feeling from the industry was that catches had been poor for most species throughout the Essex coast.

Harwich & Walton

Vessels targeting cod reported poor catches throughout the period. Thornback ray quota was increased but poor weather conditions resulted in vessels staying in port for long periods. Effort on lobsters was low, as expected for this time of year. Concerns were expressed by the fishermen over the new disposal site for Harwich Haven maintenance dredging.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe & Clacton

Due to poor weather conditions and poor numbers of cod present at the start of the period, fishing effort from these ports was relatively low. Drifting for cod and herring in the Wallet was popular resulting in reasonable catches along with some ray. A whelk potting vessel was also active out of Brightlingsea during the period. The latter part of the period saw an increase in trawling for sole east of the Essex Estuaries boundary.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 13

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 public native oyster fishery remained closed. Trawlers targeting cod had poor catches in addition to a slow start to the sole fishery due to water temperature. Bass regulations had a limiting factor on landings into the port compared to previous years. Some vessels which had spent some time working out of Rye, Kent returned to Mersea for the beginning of the sole season

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 21

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 last year. Very low levels of drift netting for cod occurred.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3

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

Low level activity was again seen from these ports. There was a decrease in dredging for clams in the Crouch and Roach rivers. Activity was mostly centred on private grounds for native and pacific oyster production. Shrimping has ceased due to the introduction of the Essex Estuaries Bottom Trawling Byelaw. An increase in whiteweeding activity on the Buxey was noted during the early part of this period.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Southend-on-Sea & Leigh-on-Sea

The Authority's management of the cockle fishery resulted in the fishery remaining closed throughout this quarter. Most cockle vessels underwent routine maintenance during this period while some went on to other fisheries including whelks, trawling and working private grounds for other shellfish. Increased efforts for thornback rays were noticed due to quota improvements. Trawling for herrings and sprats occurred with fair landings. Trawlers from these ports mostly worked away during this period noting a poor show of codling. The latter part of the quarter saw many of the mixed fishery vessels switch to sole trawls.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26

Holehaven & Thurrock

Fishing effort was low from these ports, with only a small number of vessels working on a mostly part time basis, or being out of the water for maintenance during the period. Activity from these ports has continued to decline.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

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