

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period June 2018 to August 2018

Overview

The spring quarter started slowly, with skate and sole making up the majority of early catches. Bass regulations were still in effect, with reports of considerable numbers of small school bass inshore. Some sizeable bass were landed by the commercial fleet.

In terms of shellfish, potters had steady catches of crab and lobsters as the seawater temperatures rose. 17th June marked the start of the Thames cockle fishery, with vessels conducting two trips per week, increasing to three trips in early July. Meanwhile whelk fishing in Essex waters slowed down during the warmer months.

Recreational anglers and charter boats maintained good catches of skate, whiting, and smooth hounds throughout the period. Although there were fair numbers of bass in June, regulations meant that recreational fishermen were only allowed to catch and release. Reports were received of spasmodic mackerel shoals around the coast line, and a few catches of tope.

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 relatively constant, most vessels have reached their limits early each month. Trawling efforts turned to sole, with some bass bycatch, and catches were reported as low to fair. There has also been a moderate effort on lobsters and crabs, with decent returns for the majority of the period.

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, although quota did gradually increase during the period. Reports of cod have remained poor during this period, however sole and smooth-hound catches were fair for some trawlers, with some small amounts of mullet being caught.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 14

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Hand gathering and dredging for wild pacific rock oysters continued while the native oyster fishery remains closed. There were very low numbers of cod, and therefore trawlers and netters targeted mainly sole and thornback rays. Most vessels had received permission to land bass in one form or another, and hence there was a reasonable netting effort in late spring for bass and mullet.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 21

Maldon & Bradwell

Fishing effort from these ports was mostly on private grounds. Vessels harvesting pacific oysters continued to work at levels seen during the same period in 2017 with restrictions on the movement of native oysters still in effect. Very low levels of bait potting and drift netting for mullet and sole occurred, however in the summer nets often became excessively weeded which limited catches.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3

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 on private grounds for native and pacific oyster production as well as very low levels of bait potting, netting and shrimping, with some vessels supplementing their fishing with white weed dredging.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order (TECFO) was opened on 17th June. The TECFO vessels were allocated two landings per week to start with increasing to three trips in July. Vessels were landed weekly throughout this period with per trip quota remaining at 13.6m³. Area 8 proved to be a popular area to fish, with many vessels repetitively working there over the season. The TECFO area is due to close on 28th September in accordance with the Authority's management. Few vessels pursued cod as catches in the area were extremely low. Low quota for thornback rays was again used entirely by most boats. Some reports of wrasse being caught off Southend pier.

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. Activity from these ports continues to reduce.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

Martin Ward,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex