

Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period September to November 2018

Overview

Sea temperatures declined more slowly than usual for the time of year after an extended period of warm weather and light winds in Autumn. The water has gradually become more turbid which has meant that netters and trawlers have been reporting steady catches of sole, thornback ray and smooth-hound along with other finfish species. Quota for the under 10m fleet in the North Sea was set at 2 tonnes for skates and rays and 4.5 tonnes for sole in November. For Area VIIId (Eastern English Channel in the southern part of the district) sole quota was 3.5 tonnes and skates and ray quota was 1 tonne. Cod has not shown in substantial numbers, following the same trend of low abundance in the southern North Sea seen in recent years.

At the end of September vessels involved in the Thames Cockle Fishery fished their final trips for the season, seeing good catch rates and meat yields compared with the previous year. After this the Permitted Cockle Fishery was opened in October for a single trip with 22 vessels from both inside and outside the district taking part. Officers monitored both of these fisheries closely by conducting boardings at sea and landings on shore to ensure compliance.

Lobster potting maintained reasonable catches in September and October due to the unseasonable mild conditions, however lobster potting activity started to cease by the end of the quarter.

Whelking activity has started in the north Kent ports during this quarter, with catches increasing as the sea water cooled throughout the Autumn.

Bass catches from commercial vessels are still limited to bycatch, with most being caught in fixed nets. Regulations on recreational fishing for bass has changed during this quarter to allow one per angler per day.

Weather has been seasonably mild, and winds have been highly variable. This has made for changeable conditions, meaning fishermen have needed to take advantage of fair weather windows.

Queenborough

Three cockle fishing vessels have operated from this port, two of which fished the Thames Fishery and all three took part in the Permitted Fishery. The cockles landed into this port have had some of the highest reported meat yields of the season. Other vessels in the small fleet have undertaken netting and trawling this quarter, with catches being made up of primarily sole and thornback ray with a bycatch of gurnard and whiting. There have been no reports of whelking activity during this quarter. Numerous angling vessels fish out of the River Medway, and inspections throughout the autumn have ensured compliance with the Medway Nursery Area no take zone.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

The two boats fishing out of Faversham creek sell fish locally through their own merchant business and have been targeting sole and thornback ray.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

Whitstable harbour remained a highly active fishing port, with boats using an assortment of gear types including trawls, dredges, gillnets and pots to target finfish, oysters, whelks and lobsters.

During this quarter many vessels stop using typical nets to target sole and thornback ray and start to deploy whelk pots in preparation for winter. This changeover has taken place later than usual this year as sea temperatures remained relatively high. This has also resulted in smaller landings of whelks being made at the start of the quarter, although catches have increased as temperatures gradually declined. Trawlers caught mainly sole, thornback ray and smoothhound, with colour in the water helping increase catches. Some vessels have been dredging for native oysters with reasonable catches, and lobsters were also caught at the earlier stages of the quarter.

The four TECFO vessels working the Thames Cockle Fishery from Whitstable maintained good catch rates for the remainder of the season and took part in the Permitted Fishery for the single permitted trip. Cockle catch rates and meat yields were higher than last year with new beds being discovered, which contributed to maintain three trips per week in the TECFO fishery.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

Commercial fishing activity has ceased in Herne Bay, with the only vessel working from here being sold. Some trailer-based commercial vessels are known to be launched here occasionally.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 0

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate is the largest and most active of the Thanet fishing ports, with almost all vessels either potting or netting. The gill netting fleet were completing steady trips when conditions were favourable, using bottom set drift nets to target sole, and fixed nets to target thornback ray and smoothound. There has been a bycatch of the odd cod, turbot and plaice by these netters. Bass have been landed by commercial boats who are permitted to land bass as bycatch in fixed nets. Lobster potting activity has decreased during this quarter with fair returns reported earlier in the autumn. With lower sea temperatures whelking inside the district has started for vessels operating under a KEIFCA permit, and there are also a number of Ramsgate vessels fishing outside the district for whelks. Visiting whelk vessels from Sussex have not returned to Ramsgate this year. Charter boats from Ramsgate have started to land the allowed one bass per day per fishermen, which has boosted business.

Broadstairs has a very small fleet of vessels that has reduced further, with a vessel moving to work out of the neighbouring port of Ramsgate during this quarter. The remaining vessels undertake limited netting and lobster potting activity, with recreational fishermen adding to the potting effort locally. Margate vessels have mostly been netting for skate and sole during the last quarter, although catches have been reported as poor and activity for some vessels has been limited due to repairs.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 32

Deal and Walmer

Boats that launch from the beach here have been fishing with a combination of netting and potting gears. Landings have included smoothound, dogfish thornback ray, lobster, edible crab and a bycatch of bass. Fishermen have also been potting for lobster and crab with reasonable catches in most of the quarter. Catches are often sold from stalls on the beach front and continues to be popular with locals.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Commercial fishing in Dover is minor with only two commercial vessels working from the port. The main effort has been potting during this quarter, with lobster and edible crab being the main target species. Charter boats working out of the port have capitalised on the new bass allowance of one per day per angler.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

The Folkestone trawlers been towing inshore during the last quarter, targeting a combination of sole, plaice and thornback ray. There has also been an abundance of smoothound with a bycatch of squid, turbot, bass and gurnard. Netters from Folkestone and Hythe have been targeting sole and plaice with smaller mesh gear, and catching thornback ray, smoothound, lobster and edible crab with larger mesh gear. Potters have targeted lobsters and crabs. There has

been no whelking activity reported during the autumn months, as most whelk vessels in Folkestone fish during the summer in and around Hythe Bay.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Commercial netters from Dungeness have been catching sole, thornback ray, and smoothound with a bycatch of whiting. Two of the vessels launched from Dungeness beach have been fishing within the KEIFCA whelk permit fishery in the last quarter and have been showing good returns throughout. There are reports that these boats have also been fishing outside the district for whelks off the French coast.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

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