

Agenda Item C6

Lead Scientific and Conservation Officer update

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period November 2018 to January 2019

Ongoing and developing projects in the past three months can be broken down into four groups: - Marine Protected Areas - KEIFCA projects - External Collaborations - Staffing/Training

Marine Protected Areas

A changeover of Natural England (NE) lead for KEIFCA has occurred, however continued dialogue with NE has allowed progress to be made on outstanding MCZ assessments within the KEIFCA district.

The Tranche 3 (T3) MCZ proposals have initiated some early assessment activity. A site visit to Swanscombe rMCZ has been conducted both from sea and from shore. Consideration is being given to other T3 sites that fall within the KEIFCA district.

KEIFCA Projects

Whelk projects, both EMFF population study and whelk riddle, have been covered in a more expansive report within these meeting papers.

Plans are being developed for the 2019 oyster stock survey. The previous three years of oyster surveys have been conducted specifically to the requirements of the PhD on native oysters. Moving forward, this survey will not need to follow the same procedures. KEIFCA is reaching out to local stakeholders such as ENORI and to the managers of native oyster fisheries on a national scale in order to provide a robust and efficient survey protocol.

External Collaborations

Preparations are fully underway for the ENORI cultch laying experiment in the River Blackwater in 2019. KEIFCA continues to contribute to the efforts of ENORI in this regard. The original plans to carry out experimental cultch laying in the summer of 2018 were delayed due to licensing hold ups. However, work through the winter period has resulted in a target of May/June 2019 for fieldwork to begin.

The KEIFCA/Essex University links remain strong. January saw the arrival of a MSc student to carry out work on the whelk genetics project that was advertised in

2018. The oyster stock modelling MSc was advertised twice during 2018 but had no applicants. NE and KEIFCA are exploring options to use the money set aside to fund this project to research stock modelling outside an MSc program.

KEIFCA continues to benefit from the PhD research conducted by Alice Lown, on native oysters. The PhD thesis is being prepared for publication in March 2019.

Cefas conducted a sizeable pre-recruitment bass survey within the estuaries of the KEIFCA district in November which was supported by KEIFCA. This may be a survey which Cefas look to continue in future years.

Staffing/Training

November 2018 saw the arrival of Annabel Plumeridge, our new Scientific Officer, based in Ramsgate. Annabel's arrival brings the science and research group back up to full strength. In addition, a new intern from Essex University started in January. The intern post, based at the Brightlingsea office, is predominantly focussed on the EMFF whelk population study. This post will run until July 2019.

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) training was provided in December 2018 and will be ongoing. External funding is being sought to upgrade the hardware necessary for GIS provision.

Training in the processing of whelks for the EMFF population study took place in December, and January to bring key staff up to standard on processing techniques.

Rob Dyer
Lead Scientific and Conservation Officer