

## **Agenda Item C2**

### **Shore Report - Essex**

#### **Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

#### **Quarterly report for the period January 2019 to May 2019**

### **Overview**

Poor weather conditions in January through to March limited fishing opportunities, with cod struggling to make an appearance. Herring shoals did occur in the district and were exploited by several of the vessels, however low prices meant effort was minimal. Fishing efforts were increased for sprats in this period as the weekly allowance was increased from 5 ton per week up to 10 ton per week. Thornback rays were a constant throughout this period, but prices at market fell as low as 45p per kilo, not giving the fisherman much incentive to work. Anglers enjoyed the overwhelming presence of the thornback rays, and an early arrival of smooth hounds along the beaches and piers, with slow but consistent charter boat business. Sole catches have been slow but are starting to increase towards the end of this period, but with an early showing of the 'tobacco juice', (May bloom) in the water has halted most netting and trawling efforts.

Bass has started to show around the coast towards the end of this period, and landings of bass has slowly picked up throughout April, with commercial bass limits for 2019 set at Demersal Trawls 1% by-catch per day with unavoidable by-catch up to 400kg every two months, Hook and Line 5.5 tonnes per year, and Fixed gill nets unavoidable by-catch 1.4 tonnes per year. For recreational fishers, 1 bass per person per day from April 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> 2019.

The majority of the whelkers have ceased laying pots towards the end of this period, with the cockle fleet starting their preparations and vessel maintenance for the forth coming cockle season.

### **Harwich & Walton**

Fishing effort has slowed during this quarter and catches have been poor. Lobster potting has slowly started again, but the main catches have been thornback rays. Slow bass landings have been reported, but this may be due to the early may bloom that the coast has witnessed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

### **Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton**

Fishing activities have been slow throughout this quarter, again with low prices on thornback rays and sparse cod around efforts have been low. Oyster dredging continues at moderate levels on private grounds. The public oyster grounds remain closed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 14

### **West Mersea & Tollesbury**

Tollesbury marina remains quiet with commercial boats typically operating out of West Mersea instead. Fishing activities have been slow in West Mersea with reports of fair catches of skate, and some boats turning their attentions to sprats. With the majority of commercial vessels having bass allowance in this area this has been the main effort of recent weeks but with the may bloom in season early this has slowed the fishing efforts down. Oyster harvesting is a major activity from West Mersea, as the oystermen continue to work private grounds with reasonable returns, and fair numbers of pacific oysters have been hand gathered and dredged in public grounds. The public grounds remain closed for native oysters.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 21

### **Maldon & Bradwell**

Fishing effort from Maldon and Bradwell remains low with only three vessels operating from these ports, with a few reports of skate being landed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3

### **North Fambridge, Burnham-On-Crouch, Barling, Paglesham & Rochford**

The Essex Estuary byelaw continues to prohibit trawling in these areas. This has meant the main efforts have focused on oyster dredging on private grounds in the Crouch and Roach, while the native oyster fishery in public grounds remains closed. An increase in whiteweeding activity on the Buxey was noted towards the end 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. Trawling for herrings and sprats increased with fair landings reported.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26

### **Holehaven & Thurrock**

Fishing efforts are 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

Martin Ward,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex