

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period June 2019 to September 2019

Overview

The summer quarter started slowly, with skate making up the majority of early catches, but ongoing low prices made for poor fishing. Soles were slow to appear but picked up gradually by the end of the period. Bass regulations were still in effect, with reports of considerable numbers of small school bass inshore and steady, sizeable bass being landed by the commercial fleet.

In terms of shellfish, potters had steady catches of crab and lobsters as the seawater temperatures rose. Sunday 16th June marked the start of the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery, with vessels conducting three trips per week from the start and were scheduled to increase to four trips per week after the first few weeks. After concern expressed by the Thames Estuary Fishermen's Association over the number of small cockles being rejected and observations by IFCOs during inspections, it was agreed to remain on three trips per week until further notice. Meanwhile whelk fishing in Essex waters slowed down during the warmer months.

Recreational anglers and charter boats maintained good catches of skate and smooth hounds throughout the period. Fair numbers of bass were steadily caught during this period, with plenty of school bass feeding close to the coastlines and early signs of whiting starting to show in September.

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

Fishing has been slow in this period from these ports, lack of sole has made for poor catches, with abundance of thornbacks making up the majority, with some smooth hounds complementing the catches.

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. Soles were targeted but with poor returns, and once again with skate readily available they took up most of the catches. Soles started to show again towards the end of this period with efforts increased by the boats in these ports. Smooth hound again was a steady catch, with some flounder showing.

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 2018 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.

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 there 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 16th June and is due to close on 4th October in accordance with the Authority's management. Outside of cockles there has not been much commercial fishing effort from these ports.

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: 3

Martin Ward

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