

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period November 2019 to January 2020

Overview

In previous years this quarter has proven to be a struggle for fishermen and this year has been no different. Although the warmer waters later in the season encouraged sole to remain for longer into the winter, the numbers have now declined. Skate catches have remained reasonable in parts of the district. Cod have failed to show due to the warmer waters, but whiting had a huge presence around the coast. Herring are abundant in many areas however they are rarely targeted due to the lack of demand. Sprats were targeted by several fishermen after the Christmas and New Year period, with quota still at 10 tonnes per week. Potting for lobsters has ended for this period but in contrast vessels potting for whelks have enjoyed consistent catches and fair prices. Prospecting from Whitstable cockle boats discovered a classified patch of ground just outside the 6NM point, which they have proceeded to fish leading up to the festive period. This drew attention from several Leigh and Wash cockle boats, who also looked to work the ground.

Harwich & Walton

Fishing effort has slowed during this quarter and catches have been poor. Lobster potting has now finished for the season with most gear being stowed away until lobsters start crawling again in spring. There are abundant herring and some sprat in the area however very few trawlers and netters have turned their attention to the species due to its poor market value. Many boats have been out the water over Christmas and new year for maintenance.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Fishing activities have been slow throughout this quarter. Catches of herring, whiting and skate have been reported with very little codling being found. Oyster dredging continues at moderate levels on private grounds. The public oyster grounds remain closed. Four cockle boats from Lynn Shellfish arrived in Brightlingsea port just before Christmas looking to work a patch of classified cockle ground outside the 6NM point, due to weather these boats have not worked the ground as yet.

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. Herring are plentiful however the market value has meant they are only targeted by a handful of netters. Oyster harvesting is the primary activity from West Mersea this quarter, 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. Due to a lack of cod along with other desirable species, some fishermen have turned to herring on a small scale, but effort is low. A few vessels have also been regularly towing for whiteweed during the winter quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

With the Thames Estuaries Cockle Fishery Order (TECFO) closed during this period, some cockle boats turned their attention to the outside 6NM classified patch of ground, over the Christmas and New year period this activity has slowly declined. Other boat's efforts have turned to the permitted whelk fishery with vessels laying up to 300 pots within the 6nm limit. Weather permitting catches have been good, and therefore this remains a lucrative winter fishery with prices for whelks remaining fair. Other fishing activities have been limited with some boats turning their attentions to sprats.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26

Holehaven & Thurrock

Fishing effort remains extremely low and in decline from Holehaven and Thurrock. Vessels operate only on a part time basis with trips out working very infrequent as the winter weather closes in for the end of the year.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Martin Ward,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex