

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period September 2020 to November 2020

Overview

During this quarter the weather has played a big part in the minimal fishing opportunities for the commercial fleet and with the typical transition from the summer to winter fisheries has caused a slow period for the local boats. With the colder weather settling in cod has been virtually non-existent for another year, although there have been some reports of codling being caught from charter boats and anglers. Sole, skate and herring have been the main effort for this period with plenty of dog fish and some bass still around, with large shoals of whiting hitting the coastline. As temperatures have declined so have catches of crab and lobster, while whelk vessels have started to deploy their pots again.

Efforts to work with the whelk fleet within Kent and Essex is ongoing with arranged inspections and evidence gathering of fishing methods, supporting the new Emergency Whelk byelaw to help develop a robust, fair and transparent inspection process and a sustainable fishery for the future.

The beginning of this quarter also saw the seasonal close of the TECFO cockle fishery and the opening of the permitted cockle fishery. Boats were given one trip within area 7 which resulted in only a few boats landing a bag or two of cockles due to the fleet reporting overwhelming amounts of clams on the ground. Upon further evidence gathering from KEIFCA a clam and cockle survey was initiated on area 7, with ongoing grab samples being obtained for further investigation and study into the clam and cockle populations within this area.

Charter boats and anglers have seen steady catches of skate, dogfish and autumn bass, with some mackerel, dabs and the occasional codling. The fifth of November was the start of the second COVID lockdown within England, this resulted in reduced trade for fishermen that have route to market through restaurants etc. Fishermen who operate a fish stall or delivery service continue to provide through these avenues, advertising on social media networks like Facebook and Fish Local.

Harwich & Walton

Trawlers have maintained a reasonable effort on sole and skate for the majority of the quarter, with catches only starting to tail off at the start of November. Despite abundant herring in the area, few boats have targeted this species due to low market prices. Walton pier and beaches have provided good catches of thornbacks and smooth hounds, with vast shoals of whiting and a small amount of codling reported.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 19

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Fishing effort has remained steady in these ports, with most vessels focusing on trawling, and to a lesser extent, netting. As in summer, sole and skate have remained a popular target species with steady catches.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 14

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Trawlers and netters have continued to fish for sole and skate, with occasional sizable bass also being landed in trawls alongside numerous whiting. Sizeable cod have still not shown in the area with a few netters turning their effort from sole to herring as temperatures dropped towards the end of the quarter. Potting effort has started to slow, matching the overall trend for a reduction in effort for the majority of vessels in these ports as winter draws closer. The oyster fleet has fallen on hard times for the second time this year with the second COVID lockdown, resulting in lack of demand from the hospitality industry due to the shutdown, with some oysterman diversifying to finfish over this difficult period.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 28

Maldon & Bradwell

Vessels out of Bradwell have seen a steady but consistent fishing effort this period, with most boats selling direct to the public through Facebook. Soles, herring, skate, are the staple catches with the odd red mullet and gurnard supplementing the catches.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

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

Activity has been mostly centred on private grounds for native and pacific oysters, as the native oyster fishery in public grounds remains closed. There are also very low levels of netting in the rivers, targeting herring and whiting. Dredging for clams continues in the Crouch and Roach at low levels and bait potting also occurs in the area.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 13

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order was closed on 2nd October this year, with the permitted cockle fishery opened 0600 6th October, with one trip allocated to each permit holder for Area 7. A total of twenty one vessels took part in the permitted fishery, with only a few boats landing a couple of bags of cockles due to a reported overwhelming number of clams on the ground. After the cockle season was over only one vessel turned to whelking, with ongoing joint work with KEIFCA in developing the

new Emergency Whelk Byelaw, with early inspections displaying an exemplary standard of compliance.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 18

Holehaven & Thurrock

Fishing effort remains low but steady from the few boats in the area, mostly netting inside the Thames. Reports of mullet, soles and the occasional bass.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 5

Martin Ward,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex