

Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Minimum Conservation Reference Size?

A Minimum Conservation Reference Size, abbreviated to MCRS, is a minimum size at which a fish or shellfish can be removed from the fishery. The removal of fish and shellfish only once they have reached a MCRS (usually related to a breeding size) is a common fisheries management measure used around the world. As a management measure it is relatively cheap, simple and effective to apply and easy for fishers to understand.

What is the purpose of the MCRS byelaw?

This byelaw has been introduced to ensure that minimum conservation reference sizes are applied to all fishery participants at all levels of the supply chain. The byelaw introduces prohibitions for the removal from the fishery, retention on board, transshipping, landing, transport, storage, sale, display or offering for sale of undersized marine organisms. The byelaw amalgamates a number of existing minimum size measures and introduces new minimum sizes for certain species.

What species have new minimum sizes under this byelaw?

A MCRS has been introduced for four wrasse species, adopted from the Authority's Wrasse Fishery Guidance measures:

- ballan wrasse (18cm);
- rock cook wrasse (12cm);
- goldsinny wrasse (12cm); and
- corkwing wrasse (14cm).

The byelaw also raises the MCRS for crawfish from 95mm to 110mm, and for grey mullet species from 30cm to 42cm for thick-lipped grey mullet and thin-lipped grey mullet and 36cm for golden grey mullet.

Do the minimum sizes in the byelaw only apply to fish and shellfish caught in the Southern IFCA District?

The species in the byelaw are broken into two separate schedules.

The minimum conservation reference sizes for those species listed in Schedule 1A are applied only when caught from within the Southern IFCA District. In general these sizes are more restrictive than for fisheries outside of the District. The Southern IFCA District covers the inshore waters of Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, up to 6nm from baselines.

The minimum conservation reference sizes for those species listed in Schedule 1B are applied irrespective of the fishery from which they were caught. This also applies for velvet crabs and male spider crabs.

Why do the prohibitions applied to species listed in Schedules 1A and Schedule 1B differ?

Species listed in Schedule 1B and paragraphs (6) and (7) are already subject to minimum size regulations including Statutory Instruments and the Landing Obligation, which requires certain species to be landed if caught by licensed fishing vessels. The prohibitions listed under paragraphs (4), (5), (6) and (7) ensure that existing legislation is not duplicated or contradicted by this byelaw.

The minimum conservation reference sizes for species listed in Schedule 1A are more restrictive than existing legislation and therefore the prohibitions listed in paragraph (3) are applied to all persons.

Who does the MCRS byelaw apply to?

With the exception of UK licensed fishing vessels, to whom existing legislation is applied for species listed in Schedule 1B, the minimum sizes in this byelaw apply to **all** fishery participants and throughout the onward supply chain. This includes commercial, licensed fishers, non-licensed fishers, recreational fishers, transporters and merchants in the fishing industry who remove from a fishery, retain on board, tranship, land, transport, store, sell, display or offer for sale any fish species specified in the MCRS byelaw.

What should I do if I catch an undersized fish or shellfish?

Any such species below the MCRS must be returned to the sea immediately.

How do I measure fish and shellfish to comply with the MCRS byelaw?

Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes shall be measured as follows:

- fish species shall be measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin;
- bivalve mollusc species or a whelk (*Buccinum spp.*) shall be measured across the longest part of the shell;
- a whole skate or ray shall be measured between the tips of the wings;
- a skate or ray wing shall be measured as the maximum dimension of a wing when it is detached from the body of a skate or ray;
- a lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) shall be measured as the length of the carapace, parallel to the midline, from the back of either eye socket to the distal edge of the carapace;
- a crawfish (*Palinurus spp.*) shall be measured as the length of the carapace from the tip of the rostrum to the midpoint of the distal edge of the carapace;
- a spinous spider crab (*Maja squinado*) shall be measured as the length of the carapace, along the midline, from the edge of the carapace between the rostrums to the posterior edge of the carapace;
- an edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*) or a velvet crab (*Necora puber*) shall be measured as the maximum width of the carapace measured perpendicular to the antero-posterior midline of the carapace.

Diagrams are provided in the byelaw to demonstrate each method of measurement.

What resources can Southern IFCA provide to support fishers in achieving compliance with the MCRS byelaw?

Southern IFCA provide useful resources to fishers, including leaflets, guidance documents, minimum size gauges, minimum size stickers and wheelhouse cards that assist with achieving compliance.

If you would like to get hold of minimum size gauges, minimum size fish stickers, or any other resources, please contact us by phone (01202 721373), email (enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk) or using the enquiry form on our website (<https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/contact-us>).

How do I report non-compliance?

If you would like to report non-compliant fishing activity to Southern IFCA, you can do so by phone (01202 721373), email (enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk) or enquiry form via our website here: <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/contact-us>

When reporting non-compliance, please try to include the following information in your report:

1. What activity is occurring;
2. Where is the activity taking place;
3. When is the activity happening;
4. Who is conducting the activity;
5. How are they carrying out the activity; and
6. Why are they carrying out the activity?

How can I get a dispensation for this byelaw?

If you wish to apply for a dispensation for this byelaw, please complete a Dispensation Request Form which can be downloaded from our website here: <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/southern-ifca-quick-downloads>. You can submit your completed Dispensation Form by email to enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk or to the Southern IFCA Office – Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2AA.

When will the byelaw be reviewed?

The Authority has commenced a District-wide review of minimum sizes to assess existing size limits and to investigate potential new minimum sizes for additional species. Further information on this review can be found on our website: <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/ongoing-reviews>.