

## Recreational Angling Sector Working Group Meeting – 26/07/2022 – 19:00

### Virtual Meeting – MS Teams

Attended: CH, MS, SP, SB, TF and NF

Apologies: SP, PH

#### Agenda

#### 1. Minutes of the previous meeting (22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022)

Agreed.

#### 2. Introductions

Nick Fisher (NF) attended as a Member of the Southern IFCA Authority.

#### 3. RASG Meeting Logistics and Group Membership

Membership was discussed and how that membership was spread across the Southern IFCA District. Members agreed that an increased membership from one area of the District would be acceptable given limited overall membership and an anticipated increase in high priority issues over the coming year, for example black bream management. NF suggested that there may be interested persons in the west of the District for the RASG, NF was invited to make contact with those persons and pass on details as needed. CH suggested a new member, Mr Allan Green, it was agreed that Mr Green would be invited to future meetings.

It was agreed that there would be four meetings per year with three being run virtually and one in person. It was suggested that the November/December meeting be run in person.

**ACTION:** SB to send out Doodle Poll for future meeting dates in 2022.

#### 4. Presentation: Dr Gordon Watson, University of Portsmouth

Dr Gordon Watson from the University of Portsmouth was due to give a presentation on a project collecting data from the recent Sea Angling Classic competition. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances Dr Watson was unable to attend. Dr Watson sent his apologies following the meeting and provided a link to an online video outlining the project work. Dr Watson will be invited to attend a future meeting to give his presentation.

<https://m.facebook.com/LowranceEURO/videos/the-uk-sea-angling-classic-sponsored-by-lowrance-was-a-pioneering-fishing-event-/304360697832429/>.

A summary of the work, which originally commenced in 2021 with the trial competition can also be found online at the following link.

[International sea angling event launches with conservation at its heart | News | University of Portsmouth.](#)

## 5. Southern IFCA Updates/Ongoing items:

- **Staff Updates**

Pia Bateman was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer in April 2022; she had been acting in this post since December 2021.

Sarah Birchenough has been appointed as Deputy Chief Officer for the Fisheries Management and Policy Team; she will start in post from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022. SB will continue in her role administering the RASG. Sam Dell continues to be the Deputy Chief Officer for the Fisheries Protection Team.

New officers have been appointed for both the Fisheries Management and Policy and Fisheries Protection Teams; they will be starting in September 2022.

- **Southern IFCA Byelaw Update**

Senior IFCO Simon Pengelly provided updates on Southern IFCA byelaws.

**Net Fishing Byelaw** – the byelaw has passed through the Southern IFCA Authority, who agreed to seek confirmation for the byelaw from the Secretary of State. The byelaw is now in a quality assurance process with the MMO which commenced in March. At the time of this meeting there had not been any feedback from the MMO. SP stated that this QA process may take time, once that has been completed then the byelaw is passed to the SoS for confirmation following which it will come into force.

**Pot Fishing Byelaw** – the Pot Fishing Byelaw was made by the Southern IFCA Authority at their meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and then underwent a period of Formal Consultation which concluded on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Responses to the consultation were received both in support and in objection to the byelaw. Primary areas for objection were in relation to whelk pot limits and escape gaps, these areas are to be considered by Authority Members and responses will be provided to all respondents. The intention is to take a final byelaw package to the September Authority meeting.

**Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Review** – an informal consultation is being undertaken on the management of bottom towed fishing gear in the Southern IFCA District. SP provided a link to the consultation in the meeting chat. The review of BTFG management is looking at closure areas in response to updated evidence and includes management in relation to MCZs. The review is also looking at areas outside of designated Marine Protected Areas where protection may be necessary for the most sensitive habitats such as seagrass, examples of where this might occur are Weymouth Bay, Portland Harbour and a discrete area in the Solent. A Summary of Responses will be drafted following the end of the consultation which will be made available to all interested parties and help inform the management development process.

- **Minimum Conservation Reference Size Review Update**

Sarah Birchenough provided an update on the MCRS review. The review will be recommenced in autumn 2022 following a slight delay due to staffing changes. Members of the Authority will be invited to a series of Working Group meetings to discuss the evidence base put together previously including species profiles and size at maturity data and determine if and where management intervention may be required. Recommendations from these Working Groups will be taken to the Authority for consideration as the review progresses. There are two primary research projects ongoing, the results from which will contribute to the evidence packages for the associated species, these are for the three grey mullet species, run in collaboration with the University of Plymouth and whelk, run in collaboration with the University of Southampton.

It was commented that the fish sticker issued by the Southern IFCA was a very good tool for fishers. It was queried whether all species that are included on the Southern IFCA wheelhouse card could be included on the sticker as well.

There was concern raised over the need for certain species to be of MCRS when they are being used for bait. Members asked whether the IFCA could consider introducing an allowance, for example 6 fish, which could be under the MCRS if being used for bait. It was stated that it is currently difficult to buy frozen mackerel and there are also very few mackerel around to catch with even fewer being of minimum size, this is having an impact on ray fishing in particular. Mackerel and wrasse are considered as key species for use as bait. SB informed Members that she would take this information to the Authority Working Groups.

- **Black Bream in MCZs**

Senior IFCO Pengelly provided an updated for black bream in relation to MCZs. He informed Members that Natural England (NE) had commissioned a survey in three bream nest sites off the Dorset coast. The IFCA have not yet received the results from this survey as Cefas have been tasked by NE to undertake some further data analysis. The IFCA are also awaiting full conservation advice on this matter from NE and a position on existing management principles i.e., the management approach currently used in the Sussex IFCA District.

There have been discussions with the University of Plymouth and the FishIntel Project as well as additional partners about setting up a project to deploy acoustic tags in a number of fish species with an associated network of receivers which would provide information on fish location. The aim would be to have receivers in areas around the coast in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex. It is hoped that this data collection would provide more information on black bream including use of various sites, whether there are multiple nesting attempts, how nests are connected across a site and the response of fish to catch and release. Southern IFCA have indicated that it would be useful to understand black bream across the south coast including in Poole Bay, Sandown Bay and along the Purbeck Coast with a focus on how the species moves along the coast and between nesting areas as well as where individuals go after nesting attempts. It is thought that some migration may occur around Portland into Lyme Bay after the summer period, but it would be good to understand this further. The project is currently looking at funding opportunities with potential involvement from Natural England. The project would be looking to work in partnership with the RSA community for example in the tagging work, checking of receivers and downloading of data. This would be a good opportunity for fishers, the scientific community and regulators to work together to provide evidence which will help inform management needs.

Members raised that when the issue of black bream management was first discussed, it was queried whether the biomass of the species was known and, if not, how the state of the population and impacts from fishing can be verified. It was also raised that black bream are now caught in Poole Harbour and are generally being found in more locations than has been the case in the last five years. It was stated that there are hundreds of boats fishing in the District over the course of the year, every year, for this species and unless a suitable bag limit is introduced, any other regulations are not going to be enforceable. It was highlighted that black bream are especially

important for charter vessels, especially as other species are becoming more difficult to catch. It was commented that there are not felt to be many spawning areas in Lyme Bay and although there may be some nests these are not to the extent that they are found in other areas of the south coast. It was also commented that there are so many black bream at the moment that it is difficult to get to the other species that fishers want to target and therefore the species does not need protecting in all areas.

SP responded that Southern IFCA have duties under conservation regulations which we are legally obligated to meet. Black bream is set to 'recover' as a nesting feature in the MCZs. The questions of recovering to what level and how this may happen have been raised by Southern IFCA to NE. The current stance from Southern IFCA is to raise these questions with NE and ensure the evidence is provided, enforceability is also an important consideration. It was highlighted that Southern IFCA need to protect the areas which are being used as nesting habitat from damage and that this is being achieved through the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear review in any areas which are not already subject to closures. SP commented that it would be beneficial to be able to look at the black bream population as a whole as this would improve understanding and enforceability. Whilst Southern IFCA await further evidence and advice from NE we are not yet at a stage where we can consider what suitable management may look like.

- **Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)**

There are no HPMAs proposed in the Southern IFCA District at the current pilot stage. A consultation on the five proposed pilot HPMAs will run until 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022, more information can be found online at [Highly Protected Marine Areas \(HPMAs\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/highly-protected-marine-areas).

- **Bass Regulations**

Discussions on the Bass Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) have begun and are being facilitated nationally by Policy Lab. Policy Lab are currently seeking views from industry through a number of different engagement mechanisms including an online debate which will take place in August, details of this were provided in the meeting chat. Southern IFCA have stressed to Policy Lab the importance of engaging the RSA sector in this process and the importance of bass in the District to both the RSA and commercial sectors.

General information was provided on the FMP process. The Fisheries Act 2020 introduced a requirement for FMPs and Defra have announced a number of front-runner plans with anticipated delivery in 2023/24. These plans are for species considered of greatest importance or urgency and include bass as well as channel non-quota stocks. Different methods of developing the FMPs are being explored and different bodies are overseeing the development of different plans. Policy Lab are leading on the bass FMP and the MMO are leading on the channel non-quota species FMP, the species for this latter plan have not yet been narrowed down. IFCA's are involved in the FMP process but are not a lead agency for any plans.

Members queried why an FMP was needed for bass. It was explained that the FMP will consider existing management measures, and these may be deemed to be sufficient, however there is a need for the plan to demonstrate how the 8 objectives of The Fisheries Act 2020 i.e., stocks being at MSY, ecosystem effects and consideration of climate impacts will be addressed through management. Where the UK has transferred out of Europe and is now moving to national fisheries management there is a need to consider what may be required at a national level moving forward. It was commented that it may be useful for dates of regulations for bass nursery areas to align with national bass fishing regulations.

## **6. Additional Requested Items**

There were no additional items requested.

## **7. Any Other Business**

It was asked whether a duty officer number could be provided for the Southern IFCA District. It was discussed that the office number is available but that it would be useful to have an out-of-hours contact where fishers know they could reach an officer. This has been done in other IFCA Districts. It was discussed that local officer numbers have been made available to stakeholders.

**ACTION:** SB to raise internally and provide an update to the next meeting.

**The meeting was concluded at 20:13.**