

NORTH EASTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

SCIENCE ADVISORY GROUP – DRAFT MINUTES

19 April 2022

Present

Prof Mike Elliott (Chair)
Mr Michael Montgomerie
Miss Rebecca Lynam
Mr Christian Proud

Representing

MMO Appointee
MMO Appointee
MMO Appointee
MMO

Environmental & Scientific Manager Tim Smith also attended the meeting.

The group met via Teams. The meeting started 13.00.

1.	APOLOGIES
	Apologies for absence were received from Chief Officer David McCandless, Mark Cole, Emma Brown and Bob Houghton
2.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 4TH MARCH 2022
	Resolved - That the minutes of the Science and Governance Working Group Meeting held on the 4 March 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record by the Chair.
3.	SHELLFISH MONITORING PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT
	<p>The Environmental and Scientific Manager Tim Smith presented members with a progress report of NEIFCA's Shellfish Monitoring Programme in response to the shellfish mortality events which began in October 2021. A summary of all engagement activity, data gathered from both industry observational trips and NEIFCA potting surveys were shared.</p> <p>NEIFCA shore-based enforcement officers and environmental officers have been conducting regular industry engagement visits to the ports affected by the shellfish mortality events of 2021 with an aim of obtaining information on any changes to catch rates, shellfish health and to determine the spatial and temporal extent of the impact on the lobster and edible crab fisheries.</p> <p>A total of 41 industry engagement visits were conducted by NEIFCA officers between 1st February to 31st March 2022. NEIFCA officers engaged with industry members on 53 occasions across the 41 port visits. NEIFCA officers used questionnaires to gather information from industry members, with a total of 21 questionnaires completed.</p> <p>Industry feedback for the period February to March 2022 was mixed with some fishers reporting none or very little catch, while others reported that catch rates were currently what would be expected at this time of year. The continued absence of velvet crabs was noted. There were no reports of observed symptomatic animals.</p> <p>Between 1 and 24 March 2022, 7 observer trips were carried out on industry vessels with a further 4 surveys being undertaken by NEG III. In total, over 1500 pot hauls were observed. Data from observer</p>

	<p>and survey trips were compared with historic catch return data (March 2017-19). This showed a significant increase in landings per unit effort for lobster but a significant decrease in the same metric for crab. Further assessment of contemporary and historic landings data was also presented. The Environmental and Scientific Manager highlighted current concerns surrounding data treatment and interpretation of results.</p> <p>The Environmental and Scientific Manager concluded that the report is intended to give an initial insight into the impacts that the events have had on key crab and lobster stocks. While some positive indicators were noted, results should be treated with caution at this stage given complications in the comparison of varied data sources. Further analysis and refinement of the available data will be undertaken in the coming months and updated findings will be reported to members.</p>
	<p>Resolved – (a) Members noted the presentations (b) Members supported the continuation of monitoring work.</p>
4.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
	The Environmental and Scientific Manager Tim Smith suggested W/C 16 th May. Date to be confirmed
	The meeting closed at 14.02

DRAFT