

Minutes: Crab and Lobster meeting

Meeting Date: 21st February 2023

Location: Online

Attendees	Organisation
Andrew Burn (AB)	Defra
Beshlie Pool (BP)	South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen
Claire Pescod (CP)	Macduff Shellfish
David Markham (DM)	The Blue Sea Food Co
Dominic Parry (DP)	Southern IFCA
Ella Brock (EB)	Seafish
Jo Pollett (JP)	Marine Stewardship Council
John Balls (JB)	North Devon Fishermen's Association
Lisa Bennett (LB)	Marine Stewardship Council
Rod Cappell (RC)	Poseidon
Rosslyn McIntyre (RM)	Cefas
Trevor Bartlett (TB)	The Blue Sea Food Co
Apologies	
Chris Ranford (CR)	Cornish Fish Producers Organisation
Sophie Jenkinson (SJ)	Morrisons

Purpose of the meeting

- 1) To discuss the expected timeline for publication of the most recent crab stock assessment
- 2) To get an update from the Crab Management Group on progress with the national Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)
- 3) To discuss Endangered, Threatened and Protected species risk assessments for the crab fishery
- 4) To discuss next steps for the project, as the Fisheries Improvement Project timeline ends in April

Agenda Item 1: Stock update (Action 1) and effort data update (Action 3)

RM updated on behalf of Cefas that the latest stock assessment is currently being quality checked and so she cannot provide the details yet. Cefas are also including an analysis of catch data, and splitting the data by under and over 15m vessel length. RM hopes the stock assessment will be ready for Defra to publish in the coming weeks.

Discussion

JB asked if the stock assessment used all landing data or just data provided by Producer Organisations. He understands that catches in North Devon have drastically reduced in the last five years. RM clarified that the stock assessment model uses length data from port landings, although data may not be collected from smaller ports as the landings there are more sporadic. Hopefully the catch rate analysis by vessel size will help fill some of the data gaps on the level of fishing effort distributed across inshore and offshore areas. BP asked how the 14.99m vivier vessels could be accurately captured in the catch data analysis (instead of only splitting the data by <15m and >15m vessels) and suggested trip length could help separate the data further. RM will enquire about this with her colleague.

The Secretariat recently submitted a data request to the Marine Management Organisation to try to understand if effort data from the crab and lobster fishery can be separated in a different way other than the two length classes (<15, >15m), however the data received did not provide any way of doing this. As this topic is being discussed across multiple groups, it is important that information is shared and requests are streamlined so that effort is not being duplicating.

Poseidon will include the data from the latest stock assessment when conducting the annual review.

Actions from Item 1:

- RM to feedback to the Secretariat on how catch data for vivier vessels may be separated out from other vessels within the fishery
- RM to share the latest crab stock assessment with the Secretariat when available

Agenda Item 2: Crab Management Group (CMG) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) update (Action 2, 3)

EB updated on behalf of the CMG on the development of the national Crab and Lobster FMP. The FMP will include the shared shellfish objectives, the species-specific objectives, and the scientific research plans which provide detail on the evidence needed to deliver the objectives. Examples of species-specific objectives are to establish methods to better assess stock status, and to address interactions with other fisheries. Other species' such as velvet crab and spider crab are also being considered, with one objective to maintain a 'watching brief' on the sustainability status of these species. Stakeholder engagement has taken place on the FMP development in person and online, capturing 500 stakeholders from all stakeholder groups.

Four initial management interventions have been submitted to Defra alongside the first draft of the FMP. These include:

- standardising minimum landing size (MLS) for lobster and crawfish,
- piloting MLS changes for brown crab,
- prohibiting landing of soft brown crab for bait
- improving information on recreational shellfish fishing.

The first draft of the FMP has been provided to Defra for review in February/March 2023, with formal consultation on the draft in expected to between April-June 2023, and publication expected in Autumn 2023.

Discussion

DM and EB discussed whether the ongoing work to develop crab management measures would be sufficient to improve the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Good Fish Guide rating for brown crab. The current MCS consultation is proposing a score change from 3 (think before you buy) to 4 (do not source), because there are not robust harvest control rules in place. The Good Fish Guide ratings consultation is open now, which is publicly available, and CP suggested MCS should be encouraged to contribute to the crab and lobster FMP consultation.

On the future governance structure for management, the CMG is an informal co-management group which has co-developed the FMP. Following publication of the FMP, Defra will then take the lead on implementing management measures.

Agenda Item 3: Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) FMP

LB updated on progress with the FIP FMP, and where information is required:

Section 1: Description of the fishery – needs updated data and slim down. IFCA to provide update text. Reduce graphs, summarise text (Secretariat will send template and instructions)

Section 2: Goals and Objectives – Long and short term objectives required (CMG)

Section 3: Fisheries Management Structure

3.1: Some text needs revising (e.g. references to Common Fisheries Policy)

3.3: Volunteer needed to add detail on the co-management arrangement

3.4 Allocation of resources – input needed (e.g open access/licences/limitations etc)

Section 4: Harvest Strategy and Control Rules - Overarching strategy still required

Section 6: Stock assessment, fishery monitoring and research – update needed (Cefas)

Secretariat to include recent ETP risk assessment material

Section 7: Compliance and Monitoring – previous action for IFCA to share information with Secretariat; a paragraph on monitoring compliance (land and sea based) and planning/risk assessments

Discussion

It may be possible for EB to provide some wording from the national FMP to fill in some sections needed in the FIP FMP. CP said the Association of IFCA are also developing a summary report on shellfish management in English waters, which may have text which can be used in the FIP FMP

Actions from Item 3:

- Secretariat to contact IFCA representatives in the Steering Group to update their sections of the FIP FMP

- Secretariat to contact the Association of IFCAs to check when their summary report on shellfish management will be available
- Secretariat to send DM a copy of the FIP FMP
- Secretariat to send EB the sections of information needed, for EB to check if she can share any text from the national FMP

Agenda Item 4: Endangered Threatened and Protected (ETP) species update (Action 4, 5)

Following the last meeting, Tim Huntington (Poseidon) shared two risk management templates with Gus Caslake and BP to fill out on ETP interactions and Abandoned, Lost or Discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) within the crab and lobster fishery. These have now been filled out, and Tim will review them as part of the final annual review in April. LB asked if there were any cetacean wildlife groups operating in the same area as the fishery that could provide evidence to support the theory that there are few or no interactions between ETP species and crab pots.

Discussion

BP suggested Cornwall Wildlife Trust might have some information, and confirmed that there have been no interactions reported through the South Devon and Channel Fishermen's Association ETP reporting channels. RC will check with Tim that the risk assessments filled out by Gus and BP contain all the necessary information.

Actions from Item 4:

- Secretariat to contact Cornwall Wildlife Trust and see if they have any records of wildlife interactions with crab pots

Agenda Item 5: Fishery Progress social policy updates

LB reminded the group of the FIPs remaining actions for the Fishery Progress social policy requirements. The vessel list is required by June and the grievance mechanism is required by July. The Secretariat also intends to continue collaborating with Seafood Ethics Action (SEA) Alliance to help complete social policy requirements. The Secretariat will send an email to the Steering Group to finalise the vessel lists, and asked if anyone knows of any local grievance mechanisms that exist already.

Discussion

BP said SD&C is a membership organisation, and as such she does not have any jurisdiction over her members to enforce any sort of grievance mechanism. Industry representatives supported the suggestion that the grievance mechanism in place under ILO188 (authorised by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency) is put forward as an appropriate mechanism to meet Fishery Progress requirements.

Actions from Item 5:

- Secretariat to continue trying to contact someone at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to discuss their grievance mechanism and whether they can share data on the number of complaints received

Agenda Item 6: In-transition to MSC (ITM)

JP reminded the group that the FIP finishes in April 2023, and that the new version of the MSC Standard 3.0 will be applicable for any new fishery entering the programme from April 2023. The Steering Group have been working towards Version 2.0 for the last five years. An option available to the FIP could be to enter the MSC's 'In-Transition to MSC' program, which would enable the FIP to enter full assessment using Version 2.0 of the MSC Standard and have until November 2028 to transition to Version 3.0. Poseidon will undertake a gap analysis for the FIP with this year's annual review, which will indicate how the FIP is currently scoring compared to the requirements of V3.0. JP will circulate a memo to the Steering Group, which will provide more information on the requirements to enter ITM and the various steps involved, and the group are invited to decide on the course of action following the gap analysis and annual review in April.

In regards to Fishery Progress, if there are no progress updates made on the FIP profile after April, the FIP will be listed as 'inactive'. LB is trying to find more information on this process and will share when available.

Discussion

CP raised that it would be beneficial to have an update from the retailers and food service providers to confirm if there is still the interest for this FIP to go into MSC assessment, and if it is a priority. With the MSC stepping away as Secretariat in April, the group would need to identify someone to take responsibility for the future of the FIP if it enters ITM or full assessment.

JP mentioned that Northern Ireland are looking at launching a brown crab FIP, and the Republic of Ireland are moving their 'basic' brown crab FIP to a 'comprehensive' FIP, due to market demand.

Actions from Item 6:

- Secretariat to arrange a final meeting after the annual review to support the Steering Group to agree on next steps for the fishery
- Secretariat to contact retail representatives to request that they attend the final meeting to discuss commitments to sourcing MSC certified brown crab

Any Other Business

N/A

Meeting Closes

Actions Arising	Responsibility
RM to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feedback to the Secretariat on how catch data for vivier vessels may be separated out from other vessels within the fishery - share the latest crab stock assessment with the Secretariat when available 	Rosslyn McIntyre
Secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to contact IFCA representatives in the Steering Group to update their sections of the FIP FMP - to contact the Association of IFCAs to check when their summary report on shellfish management will be available - to send DM a copy of the FIP FMP - to send EB the sections of information needed, for EB to check if she can share any text from the national FMP - contact Cornwall Wildlife Trust and see if they have any records of wildlife interactions with crab pots - continue trying to contact someone at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to discuss their grievance mechanism and whether they can share data on the number of complaints received - contact retail representatives to request that they attend the final meeting to discuss commitments to sourcing MSC certified brown crab - arrange a final meeting after the annual review to support the Steering Group to agree on next steps for the fishery 	Secretariat