Minutes for crab and lobster Principle 2 meeting 

Meeting Date: 21 July 2020

Location: MS Teams

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| Attendees | Organisation  |
| Beshlie Pool (BP) | South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen |
| Chloe Smith (CS) | Southern IFCA |
| Claire Pescod (CP) | Macduff Shellfish |
| Gus Caslake (GC) | Seafish |
| Jo Pollett (JP) | Marine Stewardship Council  |
| Joanna Messini (JM) | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| John Balls (JB) | North Devon Fishermen’s Association |
| Katie Keay (KK) | Marine Stewardship Council |
| Madalein Bradshaw (MB) | Marine Management Organisation |
| Martyn Youell (MY) | Waterdance |
| Matthew Spencer (MS) | Marine Stewardship Council |
| Rebecca Lyal (RL) | Marine Stewardship Council |
| Sarah Clark (SC) | Devon and Severn IFCA |
| Theresa Redding (TR) | Natural England |
| Tim Huntington (TH) | Poseidon |
| Tom Hooper (THo) | Isles of Scilly IFCA |

Purpose of the meeting

The purpose of this call was to provide the Steering Group with an opportunity to review consolidated data on the catch composition, bait species and endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species interactions in the South West crab and lobster fishery. Any remaining data gaps need to be identified and an agreement reached as to how these gaps will be addressed.

Introduction

KK updated the Steering Group on the progress of actions from the previous meeting in February 2020. The Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) has had two sub-group meetings: one to discuss generic shellfish management plans, where the Project UK Channel scallop action plan and fishery management plan (FMP) were used as examples; and one to discuss developing baseline information for crab stocks in the UK.

JM added that there will be another SIAG meeting on Wednesday 22nd July to discuss the Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and overlapping members agreed provide a reminder of the importance of alignment between the groups. This will be a two-way process and both groups (SIAG and Project UK) have the opportunity to learn from and support each other. Species-specific management plans are a central component of the new UK Fisheries Bill, so one of the key priorities for the SIAG is the FMP requirements. This was demonstrated by the presence of seven Defra staff members joining the SIAG FMP call. SIAG will be an industry led co-management group with Defra involvement as policy makers.

Presentation of catch composition, bait analysis, and endangered threatened and protected (ETP) species interactions

During the meeting in February 2020, the Steering Group agreed to undertake a full review of the catch composition of the fishery, an analysis of bait used by the fishery, and a review of endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species interactions in the fishery. MS coordinated data collection and review from Steering Group members and presented a summary to the Steering Group. MS provided definitions of all relevant terminology and outlined the MSC Standard requirements at SG80 to ensure the data presented was understood in the context of the MSC Standard.

**Catch composition**

MS summarised data received from Emma Pearson’s PhD that focussed on the crab fishery in the South West. This data was based on the number of individuals found in the catch, but the MSC Standard requires an assessment of the catch composition by weight. To convert this data, average weights for the species were calculated based on best scientific knowledge or length-weight estimates. This information enabled species to be classified as primary, secondary, main, minor or ETP.

The review identified 28 species interacting with the fishery. Data came from an inshore crab fishery only, and was specific to crab rather than lobster. Data was not available for all winter months over the period of study due to poor weather conditions.

Highlights include:

- Two target species for this fishery, crab and lobster

- No ‘out of scope’ species

- Seven primary species (those with management in place)

- 19 secondary species (those without management in place)

- Only one species was considered a ‘main’ species (spider crab at 6.4% of total catch)

**Bait**

During the February 2020 meeting, the Steering Group agreed to collect and review any available data on bait species used in the crab fishery, and add these species to the primary, secondary or ETP species lists where necessary. These species will need to be evaluated under Principle two of the MSC Standard.

Anonymised vessel data showed bait purchase over a full year, with the number of pots hauled provided separately. This allowed figures to be converted to kilograms per pot for comparison with the catch composition, which was also in kg/pot. There was an assumption of 500g bait used per pot, and all data for this review came from the same vessel, which typically operates outside 6nm.

Results identified:

- Three main sources of bait

- 10 minor sources

Interpretation guidance from MSC Science and Standards team says that for bait purchased from a processing plant, in this case ray backs, no specific assessment is required. Two sources used for bait (mixed dogfish and gurnard) will need to be considered further under the MSC Standard.

**Endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species**

Extensive progress has been made by the Steering Group to address ETP actions in the Action Plan, through to commissioning of a Cefas report on ETP interactions, and development of an ETP management strategy and reporting protocol by BP. The Steering Group previously agreed to review the ETP list to ensure it remains accurate. The MSC Standard requires that there is a full list of all species present in the area of assessment, whether interactions occur or not, and data on number of interactions where they do occur. This helps the assessor know all that potential interactions have been considered by the fishery.

Through consultation with industry and British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) the ETP list was updated, and species allocated to categories based on potential levels of interaction with the fishery. MS shared the updated ETP list, including the categorisation of species by risk, and requested feedback from the Steering Group on the risk of interaction with leatherback turtle, minke whale and basking shark. Humpback whale was designated as a potential risk, with particular concern over increased interaction due to the influence of climate change on distribution. Giant goby was previously on the ETP list but based on this review it has been categorised as low risk of interaction as it is unlikely to interact with potting gear, can easily escape, and has high survivability if released alive. This updated list is for discussion and sign off by the Steering Group.

The final part of this review was to get confirmation that South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen (SDCS) were happy for their ETP reporting system to be used more widely by all FIP participants. BP confirmed that SDCS will be point of contact for the FIP for gathering this information, and report annually to relevant authorities and interested parties. This process will be reflected in the FMP.

Discussion

TR noted that she has a lot of questions and offered to email full feedback to the Secretariat rather than take up too much of the discussion time. TH felt that this data review should break the impasse that the Steering Group has had over the Principle Two actions. The next step is to look at the species identified in the catch composition and bait analysis and understand their stock status. Given the lack of data available on their stock status, a Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) will probably be required, which is designed to assess data poor stocks. The results of this will inform what management is needed. For some species, such as spider crab, there are already bylaws in place as it’s a is a targeted fishery. Dogfish and gurnard will be complicated as it is necessary to identify which species are being used, and then locate which fishery they came from, before being able to understand the stock status. The data suggests that it is mostly red gurnard, but possibly grey gurnard as well. SC explained that gurnard is generally purchased through the market (Brixham or Plymouth) so there might be useful data available there.

JB commented that herring and mackerel are used as bait on the North Devon coast, and are missing from the bait species list. The list needs industry review and feedback to ensure nothing else is missing. It was noted that more information from the inshore vessels is needed, and SC and JB offered to gather data from vessels if a template of questions and methodology is available. MS agreed to produce this. As the current data is only from Devon, it will be important to collect data from the wider Unit of Assessment (UoA), such as the Isles of Scilly and Cornwall.

TH explained that data collection could continue indefinitely, so this research is a good start for the group as a discussion point and to understand the gaps. This will be enough to start the FMP and as more information is collected it can be added.

Herring and mackerel will probably be primary main species so it will be necessary to know which stocks they are coming from. JB suggested Coombe fisheries might be able to provide more information on where the bait is coming from, and SC should be able to help find this information. CS mentioned that salmon may be a bait species in the Southern IFCA region. This will need to be acknowledged in the FMP, but as would be farmed salmon it wouldn’t need to be assessed.

Moving onto ETP, TH explained that the ETP interactions in the fishery are all low level, so it comes down to ensuring there is a transparent and widely used reporting system available, with results on the number of interactions published annually. Next steps will be to incorporate this ETP risk assessment spreadsheet into the FMP, acknowledging that there may be low level interaction but there are already guidelines in place and a code of conduct for interactions, along with details of a transparent reporting process.

The Steering Group needs to make sure all fishermen in the UoA are aware of the reporting system and understand how to use it. There are also more generic codes of conduct available, for example GGGI codes on management of fishing gear, which could be a useful reference point for the fishery. MS will follow up with BP to finalise a code of conduct. The group agreed that there were no further concerns about the species included on the ETP list.

TR asked whether the fishery had considered using ropeless pots. They are being trialled in Scotland, and have worked quite well in America. JB explained that GPS is good enough to work blind gear like this, but it means fisheries officers can’t monitor how much gear is in the water. The South West fishery has been keeping an eye on the trials elsewhere, but they are concerned about the strength of tides, ground type, marine noise, AIS markers for pots, health and safety for passing traffic (can’t yet differentiate between AIS on gear or boat). CS voiced concerns about the practicalities of ropeless pots for small boats and the cost of investing in it, especially when fishermen are unlikely to see the need based on the very low level of ETP interactions.

Actions:

1. JM to continue to update Project UK on the progress of the SIAG
2. TR to send Secretariat all questions from Natural England for Steering Group discussion
3. SC, JB, BP, THo, CS to use the template to speak with fishermen in their regions for more information on catch composition and bait species
4. SC to speak to Brixham Market for information on bait species
5. SC and Secretariat to speak to Coombe Fisheries for more information on where the bait is coming from
6. Secretariat to:
	1. circulate the presentation and excel sheets for Steering Group feedback
	2. develop a template of questions to circulate to Steering Group members
	3. speak with BP about how much of fleet is observing the SDCS code of conduct, and how it can be rolled out to the rest of the UoA
	4. add the ETP risk assessment into FMP

Any Other Business

KK thanked the Steering Group for their time and informed them that the draft minutes and will be circulated in the next couple of weeks.

Close

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 | **JM****TR****SC, JB, BP, THo and CS****SC****SC****Secretariat** |