Minutes: crab and lobster principle 2 and harvest strategy meeting

Meeting Date: 26 January 2021

Location: Teams

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| Attendees | Organisation |
| BP: Beshlie Pool | South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen |
| CP: Claire Pescod | Macduff Shellfish |
| CS: Chloe Smith | Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority |
| DM: David Markham | The Blue Sea Food Company |
| GC: Gus Caslake | Seafish |
| HG: Hubert Gieschen | Marine Management Organisation |
| JP: Jo Pollett | Marine Stewardship Council |
| KK: Katie Keay | Marine Stewardship Council |
| MB: Madalein Bradshaw | Marine Management Organisation |
| MS: Matt Spencer | Marine Stewardship Council |
| MY: Martyn Youell | Waterdance |
| NdR: Nathan de Rozarieux | Falfish |
| RM: Ros McIntyre | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science |
| SC: Sarah Clark | Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority |
| TH: Tim Huntington | Poseidon |

Purpose of the meeting

This call was in two parts. Firstly, to review progress made under Principle 2 in the action plan, and for MS to update on the bait analysis research. The second part of the meeting was an action from the previous week’s crab and lobster meeting (19 January) to determine who would draft an initial harvest strategy.

**Agenda Item 1: Principle 2 actions**

**Action 3, primary and secondary species management**

This action focuses on the management of primary and secondary species to mitigate the impacts of the fishery on other species. GC had previously presented his review of alternative measures, which still needs a one-page summary for the fishery management plan (FMP). GC agreed to do this in advance of the next annual review in March.

Actions from Item 1 (Action 3):

1. GC to summarise alternative measures report for the FMP before the end of March.

**Action 4, secondary species information**

MS presented the findings of a Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) on bait species that had been identified in the primary and secondary species research last year. Findings from that research indicated 14 different species were being used as bait in the fishery, with three species composing a ‘main’ component (i.e. >5%) of overall catch in the fishery. The three species listed as ‘main’, and needing further analysis on their status and the impact fishery is having on their populations, were mackerel, red gurnard and Dogfish *spp*. MS took a precautionary approach by using data on spurdog and nursehound, but the Steering Group confirmed these species of dogfish are not being used as bait. More information is still welcome from the Steering Group to add to this bait species review.

A PSA analysis is a semi-quantitative approach to determine the productivity of a species; and the level of fishing impact a species can sustain before severe impairment. The PSA needs extensive information on both the characteristics of the species (for productivity scores), such as average age and fecundity, and the fishery and fishing methods used to catch the bait species (susceptibility scores). Using a three-point risk scale (1 low risk – 3 high risk), scores are tallied against criteria for each scoring issue to produce an overall PSA score. Where data is lacking or insufficient for a scoring issue then it is automatically given a precautionary score of 3.

MS presented the findings and limitations from his study, which showed:

Primary species as bait - findings:

* Mackerel already have reference points and therefore could be assessed against the default assessment tree rather than a PSA.
* Mackerel has a PSA score above 80 due to low productivity scores and healthy biomass according to latest ICES advice. This indicates it is a low-risk bait source.
* Spurdog had the lowest PSA score (60-70) for species assessed under Dogfish *spp*, due to mixed productivity scores and poor susceptibility scores due to lack of data.

Secondary species as bait – findings:

* Red gurnard and lesser spotted catshark both have a PSA score above 80. This indicates a low-risk bait source.
* Nursehound had a PSA score of 60-79 due to low productivity scores. This indicates it is a high-risk bait source.

Limitations:

* The limited knowledge on the susceptibility of these species led to high (precautionary) susceptibility scores.
* Only three species of Dogfish *spp* were analysed; these are assumed to be used in the fishery so a precautionary approach was taken by using the lowest scoring species.
* This analysis was only been conducted on the bait species identified in the report shared with the Steering Group and there may be more bait species being used in the fishery.

*Group discussion*

NdR asked why fish offal was not used in this analysis, as fish frames are used extensively by crabbers. MS said that due to the complexity of tracing the origins of mixed offal, the MSC Standard does not require an assessor to score these bait sources; and was the reason why ‘mixed ray backs’ were not taken forward to PSA assessment. MS said there was a summary he could share with the Steering Group that will provide more information on this.

TH questions whether nursehound might be a problem species, but feedback from the group indicated it was used in very small quantities. TH noted that if it was a ‘minor’ bait species (<2% of catch) it would not require a PSA analysis.

JB said that herring, sprat and pilchards (sardine) needed to be accounted for in this work as they were currently missing as bait species being used in bait bags. JB also said that starry smoothhound was also missing from the analysis. MS welcomed all feedback and additional data to make the bait analysis more reflective of the Unit of Assessment (UoA) of the FIP. JB said that as some of the reports are so long he would appreciate concise reports or a call instead if his feedback is needed on a specific topic.

CP asked about next steps based on the Steering Group feedback on dogfish species being used for bait. MS agreed to remove spurdog and redo the PSA with updated data provided by the Steering Group. KK asked whether the Steering Group is happy to share the bait analysis with the CMG and there were no objections. JP suggested the group ground truths the PSA results across the UoA of the FIP before sharing with the CMG. CP agreed with this and noted the CMG is not at the point of bait analysis yet.

CS volunteered to summarise the PSA analysis for the into the FMP.

Actions from Item 1 (Action 4):

1. Secretariat to:
   1. Share MSC bait assessment criteria with NdR.
   2. Recalculate PSA, removing spurdog and add starry smoothhound
   3. Pull together a one-page summary of the bait findings and share with the Steering Group
2. Steering Group members to send data and/or reports of bait use in their own fisheries to the Secretariat.
3. CN to summarise the PSA analysis for the FMP before the annual review in March.

**Action 5, endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species**

TH noted this action that has been ongoing for some time. Cefas previously produced a report on ETP interactions in the fishery, and BP followed this with a report on the management and reporting procedures in place for ETP species in the South West pot fishery. These reports have been summarised in the in the FMP but it still requires an explicit sentence stating that there are very few interactions with ETP species in this fishery. TH said he will review all the work to date to identify any outstanding issues but believed it was nearly complete.

JB said since 1975 he is only aware of two ETP interactions in this fishery, one thresher shark and one basking shark, and was before any recording processes were in place. TH reiterated that it is important the Steering Group has a reporting process in place and BP said any cetacean interaction should be reported to the British Divers Marine Life Rescue.

Actions from Item 1 (Action 5):

1. TH to review all the ETP work to date and identify any gaps to address before the annual review.

**Agenda Item 2: developing a harvest strategy**

A coherent harvest strategy across the Unit of Assessment needs to be drafted ahead of the FIP’s annual review in April. KK noted that the Secretariat could look into identifying and funding a consultant to support the development of the harvest strategy if necessary but the group felt a harvest strategy could be drafted amongst themselves. This part of the meeting was attended by BP, RM, SC, JB, CP, JB and TH and the secretariat.

*Requirements of a harvest strategy*

TH said that the harvest strategy should be high-level and succinct. It should include an explicit statement of what the harvest strategy is, including how the fishery will be managed e.g. input based through days at sea, and incorporating the differing management processes and authorities in the region (e.g. IFCA and MMO regulations). It should not include specific harvest control rules (HCRs). To score SG80, a harvest strategy must show that it is responsive to the state of the stock and works towards achieving stock management objectives. The harvest strategy identifies measures to manage the stock and the harvest control rules are the tools you use to achieve this.

*Group discussion*

SC and RM said that incorporating so many different management measures across the IFCAs and MMO under one strategy would be a challenge. TH noted that the difference in approach for the different areas of the UoA would be addressed by the harvest control rules, which could be developed later in the year. CP suggested the group consider medium- and long-term options in the harvest strategy. The medium term harvest strategy could be based on input controls currently in use, and the longer-term strategy may need to incorporate recent discussions around TACs.

JB suggested the harvest strategy recognises the differences between the inshore and offshore components. The inshore fleet is managed through regulations and restrictions from the IFCAs, but the offshore fleet are not subject to the same level of management. Over the past 20 years, management has prevented inshore fishermen being able to diversify, so when crabs were not present there were no other species to pursue and JB was worried the inshore fishery may cease to exist.

SC was aware of the timeline of the FIP and asked whether an option to progress the harvest strategy would be to list the strategies that are available but not pick a definitive one until the group has a better idea of what the fishermen desire. In the Devon and Severn District there are four compliance officers, so ensuring compliance with any measure the group seek to bring in will be difficult.

*Overlap with the Crab Management Group (CMG)*

CP noted that Defra has tasked Cefas with identifying case studies of best management practices. SC raised concerns around formulating a harvest strategy for this FIP without involving the CMG, and that any divergence between the two strategies would be a major issue. CP said the CMG will conduct a review of crab harvest strategies, which they can share with the FIP to avoid duplication of effort. TH confirmed that both the FMP and harvest strategy are iterative documents. The harvest strategy could be amended to align with the CMG’s once it has been developed, and that should be stated explicitly in the FIP harvest strategy. CP recommend this FIP sub-group continues to meet regularly and has ongoing engagement with the CMG to ensure alignment of actions.

CP said Defra is looking at regional approach for FMPs, which the CMG was feeding in to as well as consultation for the future Western Waters alternatives, which CP said could be the long-term future strategy.

*Examples of harvest strategies from other fisheries*

The group reviewed excerpts of the SSMO crab harvest strategy taken from their public certification report. SC said the Shetland strategy was able to have such tight measures – limits to boat size, use of LPUE to inform management – as it was a small-scale fishery, but for the FIP it will be more difficult due to its size.

CP asked if there were any other working examples the Steering Group to use a guidance, in particular sub-headers that could be used as the framework for the FIP’s harvest strategy. RM reminded the group that any tools and measures that are identified would have to go out for consultation with stakeholders, unless the FIP was only looking to introduce voluntary measures, in which case, how would these measures be enforced.

*Next steps*

KK asked who could lead on drafting a one- or two-page harvest strategy, reminding the group that, as Secretariat the MSC could investigate whether a consultant could support this process.

The group agreed the key consideration for the harvest strategy:

* To show an assessor that management is adaptive to the state of the stock irrespective of whether the measures are voluntary or not. TH confirmed the strategy can be voluntary if there is sufficient uptake of it across the UoA and evidence that it is working
* That adaptive management will be crucial due to scale of the UoA, crossing multiple management boundaries (SC); TH noted that Harvest Control Rules could be localised but would have to be coherent across the FIP
* It should be written at a macro level, as the UoA for the FIP was not one fishery but several fisheries (BP)
* Any strategy needs consultation and sign off from fishermen (SC and RM). KK asked whether gathering fishermen’s views would help this process, which BP said might complicate matters as views will vary greatly according to the area they fish.

TH said that it was key the group makes progress to the harvest strategy – and HCRs - as it was holding up the FIP. To help the group TH recommended using the following sub-headers as guidance for writing the harvest strategy:

* Brief history of the fishery
* Future management, referencing the work and options being discussed in the CMG
* Short-term harvest strategy for the FIP
* Long-term harvest strategy for the FIP

TH agreed to provide a template based on these subheadings. RM agreed she would start drafting the harvest strategy and welcomed input and support from other members on the call. KK said the Secretariat will help coordinate this and organise updates with/from the CMG when relevant.

Actions from Item 2:

1. CP to share the CMG’s review of global crab harvest strategies.
2. TH to draft harvest strategy template and share with RM.
3. RM to start on drafting initial harvest strategy with support from harvest strategy group members.
4. Secretariat to arrange another group meeting for harvest strategy review when necessary.

Any Other Business

Draft minutes will be circulated as soon as possible but will likely take more than two weeks.

Meeting Closes

12.00hr

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|  | Actions Arising | Responsibility |
| 1 | Actions from Item 1 (Action 3):  GC to summarise alternative measures report for the FMP before the end of March. | GC |
| 2 | Actions from Item 1 (Action 4):  Secretariat to:   1. Share MSC bait assessment criteria with NdR. 2. Recalculate PSA, removing spurdog and add starry smoothhound 3. Pull together a one-page summary of the bait findings and share with the Steering Group   Steering Group members to send data and/or reports of bait use in their own fisheries to the Secretariat.  CN to summarise the PSA analysis for the FMP before the annual review in March. | Secretariat  Steering Group  CN |
| 3 | Actions from Item 1 (Action 5):  TH to review all the ETP work to date and identify any gaps to address before the annual review. | TH |
| 4 | Actions from Item 2:  CP to share the CMG’s review of global crab harvest strategies.  TH to draft harvest strategy template and share with RM.  RM to start on drafting initial harvest strategy with support from harvest strategy group members.  Secretariat to arrange another group meeting for harvest strategy review when necessary. | CP  TH  RM  Secretariat |