

BGMCF - Meeting 17

Date:	02 nd April 2015
Venue:	BIM, Dun Laoghaire
In attendance:	Mr Donal Maguire – Chairman of the BGMCF Ms Joanne Gaffney – Secretariat Mr Michael Murphy – Secretariat Mr Kenny Parker – DARD Mr Greg Griffiths – DARD Mr Declan Quigley– SFPA Mr Michael Havelin – Industry Rep – Foyle Mr George Golden – Industry Rep Carlingford/Dundrum Mr Raymond Dougal – Industry Rep Belfast/ Larne Mr Michael O’Driscoll – Vessel owner and operators association Mr Arthur McCarthy – Industry Rep Castlemaine/Shannon/Cork
Apologies	Mr Richie Flynn – IFA Ms Roni Crowley – DAFM Mr Barry Fox – Loughs Agency

Donal Maguire (DM) welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as presented.

2. Plan for 2015 Seed Fishery

DM opened the discussion by stated that no seed survey results are currently available for ROI waters, however for the reasonable planning of the fishery it would be important to agree some preliminary dates at this time.

It was noted that application forms have been issued to all industry members by DARD and DAFM.

As in 2014, the fishery will only open if evidence of a reasonable quantity of seed resources has been identified by prior survey. It is extremely important that all industry members engage in as much surveying of the Irish Sea as possible in 2015 and that they report their findings to the Department quickly if seed is found. If seed resources are not found and reported, then the fishery may not open at all in 2015.

The BIM inshore survey vessel will operate as usual but its capability is limited by weather conditions as a consequence of its modest size and additional survey effort from the sector would be important.

The decision-making role in ROI will, as always, rest with the Minister and whilst that decision will take account of the recommendation from the Forum, other factors, (such as, but not exclusively, conservation and sustainability considerations) will also impinge upon it. Decisions on fishing in NI waters rests with DARD.

As in previous years, in cases where a seed bed, which has been found, is subject to heavy predation during the closed period, and it is likely that the seed will be lost unless fished, then the opening of such an area outside the dates agreed above may be an option being viewed as a ‘force-majeure’ type situation. Recommendations on such an eventuality, if and when it arises, will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account all relevant considerations pertaining to the particular situation.

The following are the indicative fishing dates, subject to seed resources of reasonable quantity being identified, and subject to the decision of the Minister;

- 24th April to 1st May
- 10th May to 14th May
- Possibility of an additional period

The fishery may then close until a suitable tide, potentially on 20th August, when fishing may resume.

Depending on seed availability fishing will continue through appropriate tides until 08th of December. As in previous years, a number of areas may remain closed to seed fishing due to considerations related to nature conservation. Details of the opening and closing timetable for the Cromane fishery will be notified separately as soon as these details are known.

3. Seed Fishery in NI Waters (including Burial Island)

Survey results were presented and DARD indicated their intention to open a spring fishery at Burial Island.

GG, KP informed the group that due to budgetary constraints they would not be able to supervise a weekend fishery. As such producers were asked their opinion on a Friday opening followed by a two day closure and then reopening the fishery on Monday subject to seed availability.

Industry members expressed dissatisfaction with the proposal and hoped that this will not set a precedent for future fisheries. KP assured industry this was not the case but rather a decision based on current budgetary restrictions and future scheduling decisions will be considered on a case by case basis.

GG informed industry that that it is very important that fishing is confined to the mapped area, as this fishery will be supervised by both DARD and DOE; any transgressions will lead to a closure of the fishery to all industry members.

Industry members queried the size of the fishery area and asked that it be made bigger. DARD stated that the boundary has been defined in accordance with Natural England and JNCC boundary design guidance and is already at the maximum. DOE wished to make the area smaller but DARD and AFBI resisted and defined the box to the maximum possible extent.

Industry members also queried the waste limits that are imposed by DARD (60%) in closing the fishery, industry are of the opinion that DARD is too severe in its judgement on this matter. GG stated that the 60% is a guide used but that common sense is used in any decision, if rocks or substrate start to come up then damage is obviously being done to the substrate and the fishery will be closed.

The seed mussel fishery at Burial Island off the Co Down coast will open on Friday 24 April 2015. The fishery will be closed on Saturday 25 April and Sunday 26 April and then re-open on Monday 27 April until Friday 1 May (both dates inclusive).

For the remainder of the season DARD will operate a similar schedule of opening to that in ROI waters subject to seed availability (dates above).

4. Black Boxes

GG reminded all operators that Black Boxes must be operations for the Burial Island Fishery as the Black Box data will be key in demonstrating compliance with the fishery area and that no risks were posed to the Modiolus bed.

5. Log sheets

GG and DQ raised the issue of log sheets.

All log sheets & spat sheets for ROI vessels should be submitted to the SFPA offices in Howth. Please contact Declan Quigley on 0876458485

For vessels moving mussels across the border, DARD and the SFPA both require copies of all log sheets & spat sheets. The original copy of the log sheet should be submitted to DARD if the vessel is registered in NI and the SFPA if the vessel is registered in IRL. The duplicate pink sheet should be submitted to the opposite regulatory authority.

6. Surveying in ROI Waters

Any vessel searching/surveying for seed outside the open tides for seed fishing should have a written consent from SFPA on board. SFPA should be informed before any "searching" activity occurs and will issue these consents through the Howth Office.

Please contact Declan Quigley on 0876458485

Results from the BIM surveys will be posted on the BIM website and alerts will be issued via the SMS system

7. Castlemaine Harbour (Fishing plan and biotoxins)

AMC queried the arrangements for Castlemaine. DM stated that subject to seed availability and the issuing of Natura permits Castlemaine would operate to a similar fishing schedule as the rest of the country. This should be confirmed with DAFM.

JG stated that she had been requested to assist with the new fishery plan and planned to meet with the co-op to discuss this, she acknowledged that some changes will be required in the plan

AMC queried if the plan would be limited to 5 years or if a longer plan could be considered.

Action: JG to consult the MI and DAFM and revert to the co-op

AMC also raised the issue of biotoxin closures in Castlemaine. The area was closed from August 2014 to February 2015 and this had caused a massive negative impact on businesses in the area.

There are two sampling points (East and West) and Castlemaine East has consistently been under the regulatory limit and yet zoning has not been considered in the area, the co-op has been in consultation with the SFPA but no progress has been made. AMC asked for the forums assistance in resolving this matter.

DM stated that the SFPA have traceability concerns but this has mainly arisen from some erroneous operations in the rope mussel sector. It was acknowledged that the Bottom Grown mussel sector has a much higher level of traceability due to the Black Box system and that this key difference should be considered in any zoning request.

Action: JG to discuss with the IFA to see if any assistance is needed

8. Mussel Husbandry Review/Seed Allocation Review

As industry is aware the Husbandry consultation has been issued. Industry members questioned the timing of the consultation in light of the low volumes in the seed fishery over the last number of years.

DM stated that the consultation has been flagged for a number of years and that the original recommendation for this was contained in the Rising Tide report and the necessity was further highlighted in the MSC assessment. Allocations have not been reviewed in 9 years and the industry has changed since then thus a review is necessary.

MH stated that any review needs to recognise the unique situation in Lough Foyle.

9. MSC Certification

MH stated that the MSC fee is very expensive and that the charging system must be more tightly linked to harvest volume. A more equitable system would be a nominal flat fee and then the remainder of the amount linked to harvest volume. GG stated that industry members that do pay cannot be covering industry members who do not contribute. This issue must be raised with the Dutch processors to ensure that they do not compromise their chain of custody certifications; only mussels from companies who contribute to MSC must be able to sell their product as MSC certified.

DM stated that there is some merit in changing the payment structure, however he stressed that BIM will not be left out of pocket in the certification process.

Action: BIM to review the list of companies in good standing with regard to MSC payments, give companies an opportunity to remain in the grouping and to circulate an updated list to all processors.

10. Loughs Agency Implementation Plan/ Lough Foyle - Management Measures affecting the Mussel Industry

Industry members expressed concern that the Loughs Agency were again not in attendance. It is not a satisfactory situation and that developments must be made in the Foyle if not by the Loughs Agency, then by

the Departments. KP stated that the Departments are not in a position to intervene in Licencing or Fishery regulation in Lough Foyle as they transferred their powers to the Loughs Agency for certain species (bass, tope, mussels and oysters). Once a number of primary legislation issues between both Departments are resolved, the Loughs Agency will be required to bring forward regulations for these species.

Aquaculture producers in the Foyle need licences to protect their stocks, the absence of a licencing regime is increasingly causing a problem especially when the Loughs Agency are extending closure areas for oysters, this is pushing oyster fishermen to dredge areas they would not have previously targeted and this is causing massive damage and loss to relayed mussel.

It was noted that discussions on the Management Agreement are on-going.

Action: An official request for information on the extension of closure areas to protect mussels to be submitted to the Loughs Agency.

11. Norovirus

The group requested an update on the discussions surrounding Norovirus at an EU and National level, particularly in the area of any changes to the classification system. DM indicated that he was not aware of any new developments on this issue.

Action: An update to be provided at the next meeting

12. Wexford Representation

DM informed the group that it appeared that we have lost a representative from Wexford and that it is important that this major growing area is adequately represented at Forum Level.

Action: Secretariat to seek a new Wexford Rep.

13. Date of next meeting

Industry members requested a meeting in early June