

BGMCF - Meeting 18

Date:	22 nd July 2015
Venue:	BIM, Dun Laoghaire
In attendance:	Mr Donal Maguire – Chairman of the BGMCF Ms Joanne Gaffney – Secretariat Mr Michael Murphy – Secretariat Ms Roni Crowley – DAFM Mr Kenny Parker – DARD Mr Greg Griffiths – DARD Dr Matt Service – AFBI Mr Seamus Gallagher – SFPA Mr Barry Fox – Loughs Agency 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 Mr William Dingemans - Industry Rep Wexford/Waterford

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. Seed Fishery 2015

IRL

DM outlined the current state of knowledge for the 2015 fishery in IRL waters as follows;

Survey results to date have indicated that seed settlements and growth are delayed in 2015, presumably as a result of the unseasonably low water temperatures. Larval monitoring has shown that there are significant amounts of larvae in the water but it is not possible to quantify the seed resources in the Irish Sea and thus no firm fact based recommendations can be made to the Minister by the BGMCF on a potential opening date at this time.

It is proposed to defer the recommendation on the autumn opening until the tide starting the 5th of September at the earliest to allow such seed settlements as we are currently aware of seed to mature further.

The recommendation will be considered again by correspondence (e-mails, teleconference etc), during the week of the 20th August assuming that there is sufficient data available by then. The outcome of these discussions will be communicated to industry members via the SMS system.

It was stressed that as always the decision-making role rests with the Minister and while his decision will take account of the recommendation from the Forum, other factors will also impinge upon it.

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 could be an option as a force majeure type situation (See Below). 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 of the situation.

As in 2014 the fishery will only open if evidence of a reasonably 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 and BIM 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 as a consequence of its modest size and additional survey effort from the sector would be important.

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. Industry members have been reporting finds to the BIM survey officer and this has been very valuable this season.

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

NI

MS of AFBI notified the forum that a seed bed had been identified at the Feathers and that this bed was under threat from starfish. It was his scientific opinion that the bed should be opened as a matter of urgency to prevent its loss.

Industry members expressed concern as to the chance that such a valuable resource would be lost to predation and requested that this be viewed as a force majeure situation. It was acknowledged that this was not ideal and that some industry members might not be in a position to fish at such short notice however clearly the loss of the stock to predation was a greater risk and that would not help the industry as a whole.

DARD proposed an opening date on the tide starting 7th August; however industry members expressed concern about the amount of damage that could be done by starfish before that date. Industry members expressed a preference for an opening on the suitable tides of the 27th and 28th July.

DARD and DAFM committed to attempt to accommodate the fishery on this date but cautioned that for administrative reasons this may not be possible.

Industry members indicated that they appreciated the willingness of the Departments to support this opening in line with the "Force Majeure" arrangements and that it would be a positive development if this opening could be facilitated.

Action: All industry members are to be immediately informed of the proposed opening via SMS, updates to be circulated via SMS

RD raised concerns about the DARD policy of not opening on the weekends, he highlighted that the fishery is managed on an all-island basis and that weekends must be facilitated especially if the fishery is open in IRL waters at the weekends and loads are being brought to NI sites.

GG outlined the current budgetary constraints faced by DARD and reassured industry members that although the NI seed fisheries could currently not be facilitated at weekends, inspectorate staff should be available to certify loads.

3. Burial Island Seed Fishery

GG reported on the Burial Island seed fishery. The fishery is viewed as a success by DARD and DOE rangers also appeared to be satisfied. No Modiolus was reported in any of the mussel loads and the acoustics of the horse mussel bed are unchanged following the fishery. Mussel vessels were seen to have observed and abided by the area restrictions.

4. Castlemaine Harbour

There are some early signs of a seed settlement in Castlemaine; however it is too early to judge the success of the settlement or the tonnages that might be available to fish.

JG confirmed that BIM plan to survey Castlemaine in September and the scheduling of this will be done in consultation with the Co-op.

JG also confirmed that the draft multi annual fishery plan for Castlemaine is under development and that it is hoped to have this completed for submission by the end of August.

Action: JG to work with the co-op to finalise the fishing plan.

5. Mussel Husbandry Review/Seed Allocation Review

DM informed the group that submissions have been received by both Departments and that it will be a complex task to move the review forward. The Departments propose to convene a technical subgroup to look at the responses and bring forward some recommendations. Industry members queried what input they will have in the next stage of the review and were assured that recommendations will be put before the forum for comment prior to any binding decisions being taken.

Action: DAFM and DARD to convene a technical subcommittee

6. MSC Certification.

The MSC surveillance audit is scheduled to take place on the 10th and 11th of September. Any industry members not in good standing with regard to payments will not be included in the updated client grouping.

Annual cost will be approximately €26,000 which will be shared among all operators. Final cost will only be available following expressions of interest from industry members.

7. Aquatic Animal Health – Requirements

At the request of the marine Institute operators were again reminded that they must have their fish health authorisations in place prior to fishing, they were asked to please contact the marine Institute or DARD to confirm compliance.

For seed moving from ROI waters to NI, the first load on each vessel must be inspected by the SFPA. To avoid any delays operators we asked to give the SFPA advance notice of an inspection requirement.

8. Loughs Agency Implementation Plan

BF and RC indicated that there has been some discussion at government levels on this issue. The implementation has been moved up the agenda and is receiving some attention. Hopefully there will be something more to report in the near future.

MH expressed dissatisfaction with the closure areas for oysters in Lough Foyle being extended across mussel ground. The position of the line is encouraging oyster vessels in fish over mussel ground which damages the mussel stocks. He expressed the view that this is not acceptable as it is putting business at risk.

BF suggested that the mussel industry should bring the relevant coordinates to the Lough Agency and that they will assess the situations. However he reiterated that the Loughs Agency was not in a position to provide closure for the purpose of mussel cultivation as it remained outside the agencies control.

DM suggested that this would be best addressed through a bi-lateral discussion between the Agency and mussel operators in the Foyle

9. Norovirus

DM indicated that there have been no updates on this issue since the last meeting. MOD requested that Bill Dore of the Marine Institute be invited to the next meeting of the forum to give the group an update.

Action: JG to invite Bill Dore to the next meeting of the Forum

10. Wexford Representation

JG notified the group that William Dingemans is the new forum member for Wexford/Waterford. He was unable to attend this meeting but will take up his position at the next meeting of the Forum.

