

BGMCF - Meeting 20

Date: 29th March 2017

Venue: BIM, Dun Laoghaire

In attendance: Mr Donal Maguire – Chairman of the BGMCF
Ms Joanne Gaffney – Secretariat
Mr Michael Murphy – Secretariat
Mr Nicholas Hoffman – DAFM
Mr John McGuigan – DAERA
Dr Matt Service – AFBI
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
Mr William Dingemanse – Industry Rep Wexford/Waterford

Apologies: Mr Barry Fox – Loughs Agency

Donal Maguire (DM) welcomed all to the meeting.

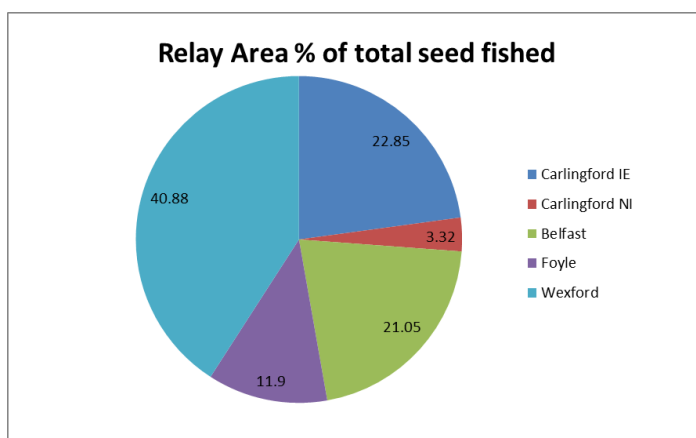
1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting from the 28th April 2016 were accepted as presented.

2. Seed Fishery 2016

The preliminary seed data was presented by DM, this data was yet to be cross referenced with the Departmental data but final data would be presented in the minutes (Data below) for the 2016 seed fishing season were explained by DM who gave an overview of their content.

Total Seed Fished	11766.9 (Gross) 9496.4 (Net)
Fishing events	137
Days Fished	23
Vessels	21
Sourced ROI Waters	86.25%
Sourced NI Waters	13.74%



3. Seed Fishery 2017

Allocations

DAERA and DAFM indicated that there is no intention to amend allocations for the 2017 seed season.

Industry members queried access to the seed fishery, given the Supreme Court judgement in late 2016. It was confirmed that an amendment had been proposed to allow NI vessels access to IE waters but this is now going through the Oireachtas and that no one could predict the outcome of this process.

Industry members queried if IE vessels can fish in NI waters – JMG confirmed this was the case.

Industry members queried if NI vessels can fish in IE waters – It was confirmed that this is not currently permitted.

JG indicated that industry member could track the process including suggested amendments through the Oireachtas website – <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=34521&&CatID=59>

Industry member requested that there be an early distribution of paperwork to operators – DAFM and DAERA confirmed that they would endeavour to get the paperwork out at the earliest possible date

Tides

Tide tables were circulated and the suggested tides subject to seed availability are as follows:

Spring opening - 31/05/2017 to 06/06/2017 with the possibility of an additional tide starting 29/08/2017

Autumn Fishery - 29/08/2017

Surveying

IE - The T Burke is having some technical issues but it hoped that surveying will commence in the last week of April.

(Please note there have been a number of additional issues with the vessel and that surveying has been further delayed)

NI- AFBI surveyed in early April (results pending) and plan to resurvey in July

With regard to industry surveys JG reminded all that in the case of IE industry surveys that DQ of the SFPA must be notified and for NI, the industry would liaise with DARD Fisheries with regard to observers etc.

SMS System

SMS system was very effective in 2016 however a small number of fishing records are not being submitted via SMS. Please note that this is a condition of the seed authorisations in IE waters.

A number of industry members had expressed dissatisfaction with the 2016 closure of the fishery in IE waters, in future vessels holding authorisations will be canvassed re opening and closing the fishery outside the agreed tides – industry members of the forum will be further consulted prior to a recommendation to either DAFM or DAERA.

4. Castlemaine Harbour

Fishing plan has been accepted by the Minister and will cover a period of 8 years – this will align with licence duration and thus the current Natura assessment

AMcC asked the forum whether further work was required to allow Castlemaine fishermen to bring in seed from outside the area. JG pointed out that the new fishing plan draft currently includes the potential for taking in seed from outside the harbour and that such movements will be permitted subject to a prior assessment of the seed beds for the presence of IAS (Invasive Alien Species).

Industry members queried what was involved in this screening and whether more training was planned on this issue in 2017. JG stated that external consultants would complete this survey and a risk assessment and that this work would be completed prior to the fishery opening.

AMC further queried the implementation of force majeure in Castlemaine in the situation where seed stocks were under threat – if the starfish were eating all the seed none would be available for the birds anyway and thus it should be possible to opening quickly

The point was accepted by DAFM confirmed that there are still procedures that must be followed. If such a situation was to arise, DAFM would do their utmost to expedite an opening but could give no guarantees.

5. MSC Certification

JG updated the meeting on the current situation regarding MSC for the sector. The fishery is certified for another year and we will be subject to a maintenance and recertification audit in 2017, if industry members still see a value in the MSC label.

Industry members indicated that certification is still required and is important.

JG further indicated that the plan is to go to tender for recertification for the next four years and that through this process it is hoped to minimise costs to client members.

6. Mussel Husbandry Review, carrying capacity

The issue of the husbandry review and carrying capacity is under continual review by DAFM and DAERA to ensure that relaying activities are not causing any harm to the ecosystem of the relay areas.

MS indicated that the carrying capacity model in Lough Foyle has been extensively updated and that this is now a full ecosystem model for the catchment. RD expressed concern that there had been no consultation on this and MS assured him he would follow up with colleagues in AFBI.

MS also indicated that there is work underway in Belfast Lough to conduct microbial source tracking in an effort to track where the microbial sources are in the Lough.

7. Water Quality Belfast Lough

JG highlighted the problems with water quality in Belfast Lough. MS and JMG confirmed they are aware of this issue and that DAERA and AFBI are working on this issue.

8. Licensing – Lough Swilly

Licences have been advertised in the Swilly – all have been reduced in area from that applied for (new and renewal) and are now waiting an archaeological assessment to be completed.

JG confirmed that BIM are working on the archaeological assessment and are trying to establish what-if any sites can be screened out as part of a desktop assessment and which suites require more survey.

9. Aquatic Animal Health – TTX, Norovirus, Authorisation

TTX

A CEFAS TTX study paper has been recently published by FSA in the UK, TTX positive shellfish was identified in southern England but no TTX was detected in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

JG confirmed that there is still no regulatory limit or a proposal to introduce one at

Noro virus

JG confirmed that a Europe wide survey of Norovirus levels commenced this year and that the regulatory focus remains firmly fixed on Oysters. It is felt that a regulatory limit will be established in the future but that more information is required on test methods before this can happen.

Fish Health Authorisations

The MI/SFPA/Secretariat will be in contact with all industry members regarding the fish health authorisations for the 2017 season. The arrangements for 2016 season were seen as an improvement and it was suggested that the situation would be again improved by early distribution of fishery paperwork to operators.

10. Loughs Agency Implementation Plan

Agenda item deferred due to no representative of the Loughs Agency being present

11. AOB

IAS species and ballast waters

DQ indicated that he has had a number of queries regarding IAS species and ballast water and why this risk and that posed by leisure vessels is not being addressed.

Action Point – JG to research this topic further and report back to the group at the next meeting

DM thanked all for attending the meeting which was then closed.