

Minutes: UK Scallop Steering Group (Principle 2)

Meeting Date: 9th February 2022

Location: Online

| Attendees | Organisation |
|-----------------------|--|
| AL: Andy Lawler | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture (Cefas) |
| AH: Adam Holland | Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation |
| BC: Ben Collier | Northern Ireland gear trials |
| BL: Bill Lart | Seafish |
| CB: Coco Bagley | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) |
| CD: Calum Duncan | Scottish Environment Link |
| FN: Fiona Nimmo | Poseidon |
| JE: Jack Emmerson | Isle of Man Government |
| JH: Juliette Hatchman | South West Fish Producers Organisation (SWFPO) |
| JP: Jo Pollett | Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) |
| JPo: Jim Portus | Scallop Industry Consultation Group |
| KK: Katie Keay | Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) |
| HF: Hannah Fennell | Orkney Fisheries Association |
| MF: Mairi Fenton | Herriot-Watt University |
| MS: Matthew Spencer | Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) |
| MSc: Marija Sciberras | Heriot-Watt University |
| SM: Simon Macdonald | West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group |
| RW: Rob Whitely | Natural England |
| Apologies | |
| Carrie McMinn | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) |
| Hannah McIntyre | Marks and Spencer |
| Andy Boulton | Waitrose |

Purpose of the meeting

The meeting will focus on progress made on Principle 2 actions. This is the last meeting in Year 3 of the FIP before the Annual Review in April 2022. There is an opportunity of making score changes in some of the actions highlighted today before the review takes place.

Agenda Item 1: Intended Year 3 score changes moving into Year 4

Eleven score changes are expected in the next Annual Review across the three principles. During this meeting discussions will focus on score changes in Principle 2. The performance indicators (PIs) expected to move from SG60 to SG60-79 are: Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species (ETP) Outcome (PI 2.3.1); ETP Management (PI 2.3.2); Habitat Outcome (PI 2.4.1) and Habitat Management (PI 2.4.2). The only expected score change from SG60-79 to SG>80 is ETP Information (PI 2.3.3).

Agenda Item 2: Endangered, Threatened and Protected species

Wheelhouse Guide

A sub-group was set up to develop a wheelhouse guide that supports ETP reporting requirements. The guide being developed for this FIP is an update of the one developed by the Sustainable Fisheries Accreditation Group (SFSAG), and the sub-group has requested additional guidance from the Shark Trust. The wheelhouse guide will include more than elasmobranchs as it is based on the list of ETP species and Priority Marine Features previously agreed by the Steering Group. MS requested Steering Group members provide any high quality and detailed imagery of the ETP species on the list. MS shared a draft of a page of the guide, with two species per page, and a QR code that could link to further information.

Discussion

The Steering Group discussed the possibility of a digital wheelhouse guide, that could be accessed by phone, and had the benefit of embedded links. A laminated hard copy with hanging hook, and QR code linking to further information could be provided, though would be more costly. FN noted that there is no requirement in the MSC Fisheries Standard for a hardcopy, only that the fishermen are aware of the guide and know where to check species identification. A poster on deck would be easy to reference but the most useful format will be dependent on the preference of each fisherman.

The Steering Group discussed the availability and utility of marine species ID apps, such as 'Seek'. RW suggested using Remote Electronic Monitoring, and MF noted a student at Heriot-Watt is designing a model that uses Artificial Intelligence to identify bycatch on the conveyor belt. MF agreed to send details of the research to RW. FN noted that cameras were used above the conveyor as part of the Channel scallop Post Doc research at Bangor University, but confidentiality agreements prevent the data from being shared for other uses. HF reflected a similar agreement for Scottish vessels, where data is collected on the bycatch in the fishery, but the confidentiality agreements mean the data cannot be used for any other purpose, including ETP species identification. MS agreed to arrange the next sub-group meeting to finalise the guide before the annual review.

ETP habitat suitability maps

MF is advertising for a Masters project to focus on the ETP habitat suitability models that will predicate the distribution of Priority Marine Features (PMF) for the FIP. If MF has time to do this research herself then it should be complete by April 2022, but if it is a Masters student, then the report will be ready by summer.

Discussion

CD asked how this relates to Marine Scotland's commitment to improved protection for PMFs and FN explained that the modelling from MF's PhD should support Marine Scotland's commitments, and will be considered in the next Annual Review. Information on the overlap of the fishery with PMFs is required to meet the SG60-79 level of the MSC Standard. As unidentified mortality is also required, the bycatch report from Marine Scotland Science (Lynda Blackadder) will also contribute towards the action, once the report is published.

Alternative Measures

BL updated the FIP's alternative measure report to consider ETP species, which will contribute to a potential score change for the ETP management performance indicator (2.3.2). The impact of dredge design on the list of species has not been reported in literature, therefore spatial management was suggested as an alternative option for management.

Discussion

CD and BL discussed the potential opportunity for an analysis of the impact of dredging on the list of species, and pros and cons of a spatial management approach. JPo suggested that if the Steering Group determines it is unable to adjust the scallop dredge design, then spatial management is the only route of protection. FN suggested that where there is overlap of gear with the species, then spatial management could be considered. Information on the extent of species recovery can also be included from MF's work. BL suggested considering new dredge technology that is currently being trialled in Canada.

Actions from Item 2:

1. MF to:
 - a. share details of the Heriot-Watt PhD using AI to analyse bycatch from conveyor belts with RW.
 - b. share the two 2021 Masters student reports on fishing gear interaction with specific ETP species.
 - c. share details of her PhD research with BL to add to the alternative measures report.
2. MS to arrange a wheelhouse sub-group meeting to finish the guide by April 2022, and to contact Steering Group members with the outstanding images and content needed.
3. BL to supplement the Alternative Measures Report with information on gear interaction with ETP species, gear penetration of the seabed, and the extent of knowledge on seabed recovery.

Agenda Item 3: Habitats

PhD: Review of management measures for scallop fisheries worldwide

MF reviewed commonalities in the management measures of scallop fisheries worldwide and whether there is a core suite of measures designed to protect seabed habitats that all or most MSC fisheries have. Most measures are designed to protect the target stock which may have indirect benefits to the seabed, but there are very few measures specifically designed to seabed management. MF will update further at the next Steering Group meeting.

MF is modelling the PMFs susceptible to impacts from scallop gear. These include horse mussel beds, and northern sea fan and sponge communities. MF's priority is looking at the condition of commonly encountered habitats in scallop dredging using the Relative Benthic Status (RBS) approach, and potentially the BH3 disturbance model from Natural England/ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The results should be ready for the next Annual Review.

MF's models are based on VMS data to understand the footprint of the fishery. This data is currently unavailable for the inshore vessels, and although iVMS is expected to be rolled out by end 2022 there has not yet been confirmation that the data will be accessible. If the data cannot be accessed for the FIP then the Steering Group will need to consider the impact this might have for the volume of quantitative data available in an MSC assessment. FN suggested working with the MMO to alert them early on to the need for the Steering Group to access this data. MF will be seeking interviews with inshore skippers for qualitative information to supplement the iVMS data. In terms of the MSC

methodology at SG60, a broad understanding of vessel impact is required, whereas at SG80 more specific data is required on all vessels in the fishery.

Discussion

RW and MSc described the characteristics and applications of the BH3 model compared to, and in conjunction with, RBS data. MF clarified for CD the process in which the BH3 modelling can show suitable habitats for PMF's as well as the current extent of them. This information then supports recommendations to the management organisations.

Low impact gear trial – slides available

Marija Sciberras at Heriot-Watt University presented their research into the modification of the scallop dredge belly bag to reduce the impact on the seabed. Detachable skids that raise the bag by 10-11cm aim to reduce environmental footprint, drag and belly bag wear. A skidded dredge and standard dredge were towed side by side on the same trawl to compare catches and impact, with sample sites in Cardigan Bay (Wales) and the Moray Firth (Scotland).

The results generally supported the use of skids from a financial standpoint (increase in harvested marketable scallop; reduced gear wear), though were based on a relatively small sample size. Larger ring size reduced the catch of undersized scallops, though not the overall bycatch of ETP. The large rings also experienced increased wear. Marija suggested LED lights could be used to scare rays away from the dredge to further reduce the level of ETP interaction with the gear.

Dredge marks were more visible in soft sediment as they sink deeper, and resulted in more damage to the seabed, however when the skids were in place there was less damage detected than from standard dredge gear. There is additional weight from the skids but reduced drag, wear and gear disposal. Introduction of the skids would need to be combined with other gear modifications and management measures, such as quota and rotational harvesting.

Discussion

JPo asked the survival rate of undersized scallops passing through the 92mm rings versus those discarded from the deck from smaller rings. Marija said it was not a focus of the research, but could be reviewed as part of the next phase of the project. From a previous study, BL had found the length of time within the belly bag correlates with reduced survivability due to stress. The damage is largely at the first point of contact with the dredge. BL suggested combining teeth technology from Richard Gidney with the skids.

CD asked if crustaceans were found in the bycatch. Marija said that spider crab made up approximately 95% of the Welsh bycatch, and there was some brown crab present in the catch in Scotland. Marija will check whether there were photos of the seabed after the skid dredge has been towed to share with BC. Going forward, an ROV system is needed to record seabed topography before and after the trawl.

RW asked whether any substrate type is inappropriate for the skids. MSc only has evidence for the surveyed ground, and had industry opinion that it would be inappropriate for very rocky ground, though it is unclear until it is tested.

Actions from Item 3:

1. MF to update on the scallop fishery habitat management measures report at the next Steering Group meeting.
2. RW to share slides on the BH3 model with the Secretariat for distribution to the Steering Group.
3. Secretariat to provide MSc with the Alternative Measures report.
4. MSc to:
 - a. share the slides with sign off from the funder when the project is complete, with an accompanying animation video. Expected by the end of march.
 - b. check whether there are photos of the seabed after the skid dredge has been towed and share with BC.
5. Secretariat to engage with MMO to find out who will have access to iVMS data once it has been rolled out.

Agenda Item 4: Ecosystems

FN asked for any further comments on the UK scallop SICA report. CD shared his concern on shifting baselines if the historical range of PMFs is not considered. FN noted that in the scallop SICA it was highlighted that this is being considered in MF's analysis. FN suggested meeting with CD to discuss this further after the annual review and CD requested members of ScotLINK join the discussion.

Actions from Item 4:

1. The Secretariat to include an item on the potential historic distribution PMFs and the fishery footprint at the next Environmental sub-group meeting.
 - a. Steering Group members to contact the Secretariat if they object to additional members of ScotLINK to attend the Environmental sub-group meeting with CD.

Agenda Item 5: FP.org update

The status of the social policy requirements are:

1. *Self-evaluation criteria*: Complete. The criteria for needing a risk assessment was met as more than 25% of crew are foreign. Next steps are for the Secretariat to identify a consultant to review the FIP's social dimension in more detail and produce a workplan. Suggestions for names of suitable consultants welcomed.
2. *Sign-off of the Code of Conduct*: Pending completion, due on the first FIP update after **May 2022**.
3. *Vessel lists*: Pending completion, due on the first FIP update after **May 2022**.
4. *Grievance mechanism*: Pending completion, due on the first FIP update after **May 2022**. This policy does not require the FIP itself to have its own grievance mechanism. Rather, this policy requires the fishery to demonstrate the existence of one or more grievance mechanisms that cover all fishers in the FIP.

Discussion

JH will check if ILO 188 covers the grievance mechanism. JH asked the outcome of the SW Regional Fisheries Management group meeting. MS had presented on Project UK, and had requested interested skippers who are not in a Producer Organisation to get in touch, but there had been no response. JH noted the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) covers vessels without POs, and if

there a separate sub-group considering vessel lists, then JH would like to be involved. KK agreed that maybe a smaller group would be effective.

Actions from Item 5:

1. JH to:
 - a. Check if the ILO 188 requirements cover the grievance mechanism required by FisheryProgress.
 - b. Table the development of a vessel list with the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG).
2. The Secretariat to consider creation of vessel list sub-group.

Meeting Closes

16:00

| Actions Arising | | Responsibility |
|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| 1 | MF to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) share details of the Heriot-Watt PhD using AI to analyse bycatch from conveyor belts with RW. b) share the two 2021 Masters student reports on fishing gear interaction with specific ETP species. c) share details of her PhD research with BL to add to the alternative measures report. d) update on the scallop fishery habitat management measures report at the next Steering Group meeting. | Mairi Fenton |
| 2 | Secretariat to arrange a wheelhouse sub-group meeting to finish the guide by April 2022, and to contact Steering Group members with the outstanding images and content needed. | Secretariat |
| 3 | BL to supplement the Alternative Measures Report with information on gear interaction with ETP species, gear penetration of the seabed, and the extent of knowledge on seabed recovery. | Bill Lart |
| 4 | RW to share slides on the BH3 model with the Secretariat for distribution to the Steering Group. | Rob Whitely |
| 5 | Secretariat to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide MSc with the Alternative Measures report. b) engage with MMO to find out who will have access to iVMS data once it has been rolled out. c) include an item on the potential historic distribution PMFs and the fishery footprint at the next Environmental sub-group meeting. d) consider creation of vessel list sub-group. e) Steering Group members to contact the Secretariat if they object to additional members of ScotLINK to attend the Environmental sub-group meeting with CD. | Secretariat All |

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| 6 | JH to: a) Check if the ILO 188 requirements cover the grievance mechanism required by FisheryProgress. b) Table the development of a vessel list with the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG). | Juliette Hatchman |
| 7 | MSc to: a) share the slides with sign off from the funder when the project is complete, with an accompanying animation video. Expected by the end of march. b) check whether there are photos of the seabed after the skid dredge has been towed and share with BC. | Marija Sciberras |