

Fishery Management Plan for Waterford Estuary Razor Clams

This plan was drafted by The Marine Institute and the South East Razor Association

Date: July 25th 2019.

Background

The Waterford estuary has been classified for the production of razor clams and a fishery operated in the estuary in 2018. Consistent with the protocols outlined by the Inshore Management Group (DAFM and Marine Agencies) the measures outlined below seek to manage the sustainable exploitation of the stock of razor clams in the Estuary for 2019.

Area

The Waterford estuary is a Special Area of Conservation (Figure 1). Any development of razor clam fishing in sedimentary habitats in the SAC should be balanced with the capacity of these habitats to recover from impacts caused by the fishery. The management measures outlined below provide this balance.

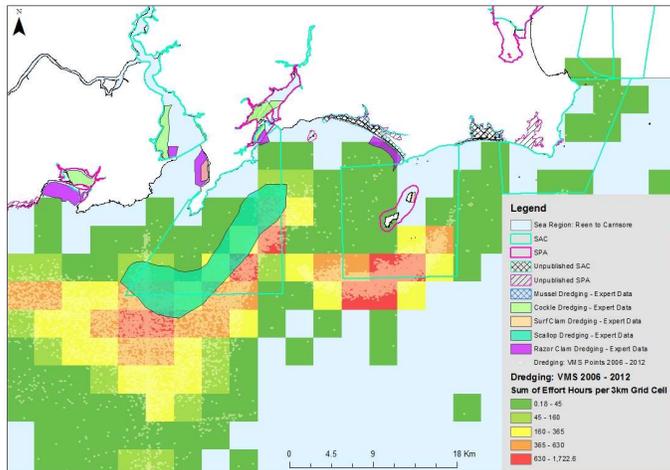


Figure 1. South Wexford SAC and SPA designations and fishing activities or potential fishing activities

Stock Distribution

The razor clam stock is distributed in two areas in Harrylock Bay and on the west side at Creadon Head (Figure 2). The clam bed was surveyed by a commercial razor clam vessel between March and May 2019. The survey covered an area of 5.99km². The total area dredged in 2019 was 4211m² compared to 1623m² in the previous survey in 2017.

Biomass

Total biomass, estimated from the May 2019 survey, was 468 (95% confidence intervals $\pm 429-513$ tonnes) tonnes. Biomass of razor clams over 130mm was 412 tonnes.

Size distribution

There was a peak in clam numbers at 130-150mm in 2019. This peak was just below 130mm in Nov 2017. The abundance of clams over 150mm was similar in 2019 and 2017. There was no evidence of significant recruitment of clams below 100mm in the 2019 survey.



Figure 2. Distribution of razor clams in Waterford estuary north of Creadon Hd (left) and Harrylock Bay (right). Survey stations (top). Interpolated distribution of biomass (bottom)

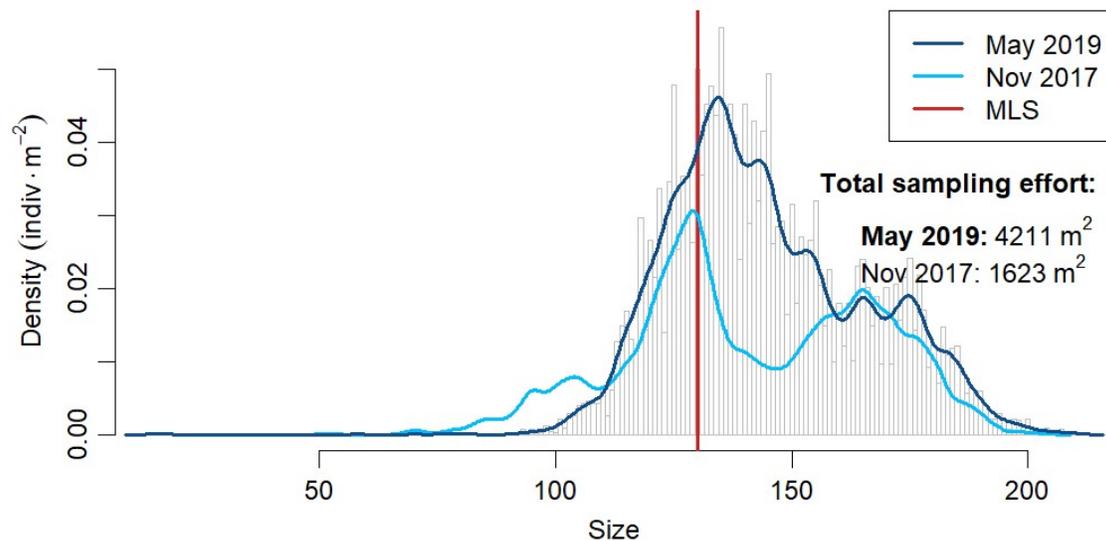


Figure 2. Size distribution of razor clams in Waterford estuary in 2018 and 2019

Risk factors

There are approximately **11** vessels in Wexford that could easily access the stock. Some of the 70+ vessels fishing in the North Irish Sea could move to enter the fishery. These risks need to be managed to ensure compliance with the TAC and other measures and to protect the economic viability of the fishery. The measures set out below may go some way to reducing risk; the total TAC for 2019 and the weekly quotas are low compared to fishing conditions in the North Irish Sea or Curraclloe/Rosslare.

Measures

1. Biomass estimated from the survey was 468 tonnes
2. Total Allowable Catch (tonnes) for 2018 advised by the Marine Institute is 10% of biomass or **47 tonnes for 2019**. The proportion of biomass has been used to estimate the TAC for other new fisheries on the west coast has varied from 10-15% and seems compatible with the productivity of the stock. However, future TACs may need to be adjusted in response to changes in size structure and recruitment.
3. All vessels in the fishery will report position (using GPS trackers) all of the time irrespective of the activity of the vessel to presence and absence in the fishery.
4. The minimum landing size will be **130mm** shell length
5. Hours of fishing will be from **07:00 to 19:00hrs** Mon-Sun
6. Each vessel will fish with 1 dredge only. The dredge will not exceed 122mm in width and will have a bar spacing not less than 10mm
7. Landings per vessel per week will not exceed **600** kgs.
8. All operators will report landings data in the form of logbook or gatherers sheets to the SFPA within 48hrs of landing
9. The SFPA and MI will collaborate to estimate landings and changes in landings per unit effort on a weekly basis when the fishery is open.
10. Landings per unit effort will be reported to the participating Skippers or representative during the fishery by the Marine Institute. This secondary indicator could also be used to

manage the fishery even when the TAC is not fully taken and in order to protect the economic viability of the fishery

11. Sampling to maintain the microbiological classification (razor samples), water samples for phytoplankton and shellfish samples for biotoxin will be taken by designated persons active in the fishery and in consultation with the SFPA
12. Measures above, where not already legislated for, will be introduced on a voluntary basis