

## Action points from NIFF pre-meeting, Alexander Hotel, Dublin, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016

### 1. Discussion on the matters arising from meetings with NPWS, Dept. of Social Protection and IFI

#### Social Protection

**Action Point:** NIFF secretary to seek clarification from the Department of Social Protection on the following matters arising:

- Is Class P social insurance available to fishers that are self- employed sole traders (owner/skipper) in addition to those that are share fishermen or women?
- If a share fisherman/women opts to pay the additional class P social insurance how long does he/she need to be paying into it to qualify for benefits (Job seekers benefit, illness benefit, treatment benefits)? There is a perception that you would need to be paying it or two years before you could qualify for any benefits.
- Information on what Fish Assist was.
- Job seekers benefit application form to highlight its unsuitability for the inshore fishing sector.

NIFF wants to apply for funding to get assistance to research the best type of social welfare scheme to assist fishermen when they can't get out fishing but as NIFF are not a legal entity at the moment they can't apply for funding.

**Action Point:** NIFF to research options of becoming a legal entity that would allow them to apply for funding. DAFM to check and verify if NIFF becomes a legal entity would it change their status.

#### Inshore Fisheries Ireland

Engagement at NIFF meeting 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016 was felt to have been useful.

**Action Point:** NIFF to contact IFI when required.

#### National Parks and Wildlife Service –Seals

Contact has been established and the NIFF hopes to work with the NPWS in regard to seals in the future. SW RIFF met with one of the project partners from the LIFE + proposed project on "Mitigating Seal Fishery Interactions in Irish Waters" and explained how seals have damaged the industry economically and what research they would like the LIFE + project to include. NIFF members felt that the industry has done a lot to mitigate the seal problem for example by changing from gill netting to potting. However the mitigation measures taken by industry have not been documented. There is a feeling that seals have been looked at from an environmental viewpoint only but that no one is listening from the fishermen's side.

#### Action Points:

- a) LIFE + project partner to come back to SW RIFF with redrafted project taking in the SW RIFFs concerns.
- b) BIM to get update on work conducted on seals from BIM's Fisheries Technical section and request that a presentation is given on the seal work that BIM is conducting.

- c) NIFF needs to figure out how to best progress their case on seals.
- d) Other issues arising: As it has been established that there are numerous overlaps in the marine sector between government departments there is no reason why NIFF can't invite any government department involved in the sector to speak to the NIFF or the RIFFs on particular issues.

## 2. Razor/Bivalve issues

- a) **NE RIFF update – Action Points:** NE RIFF to bring new proposal to the NIFF which highlights their problems with the razor fishery, some proposed solutions and the route to the desired endpoint. As the NE RIFF have not met since the 12.01.2016 NE RIFF to arrange a meeting with assistance from BIM.
- b) **Electrofishing –Action Point:** This type of research can't be done while the fishery is unsustainable as it could create an expectation with the possibility of fishing moving into deeper grounds where the fish are protected from exploitation. Until we limit the fishing effort electrofishing can't be explored further
- c) **Areas prioritised for investigation and potential classification as a bivalve production area.**

**Action Point:** From the list of 47 potential sites in the report "The distribution and fishery potential of Razor clams (*Ensis arcuatus* and *Ensis siliqua*) off the West and south coasts of Ireland" by the MI, 6 areas have been prioritised by the RIFFs for initial investigation.

They are:

West RIFF – Killary Harbour and the Aran islands;

NW RIFF- Broadhaven including Frenchport and Killary North side of mouth;

SW RIFF – Outer Bantry Bay and Castletownbere including Adrigole.

North RIFF – Rutland Area

DAFM complemented the RIFFs on the bivalve measures that have taken place over the last year.

- **Action point:** As the NIFF could not come to a consensus of the order of priority of sites for investigation the MI and SFPA will make the decision. MI and SFPA to provide feedback to the NIFF.
- **Action Point:** If any fisherman wants to go and investigate a potential area for bivalve classification please contact the MI prior to investigation to find out the proper methodology for surveying and reporting of the results. If the survey deems the area to be unviable it can be taken off the list.

## 3. Website

Feedback from RIFFs on the Website has been taken into account.

**Action Point:** Make any other suggested changes to the website and launch it as soon as possible.

#### 4. Management Measures for Velvet Crab

A proposal from the West RIFF to introduce management measures for Velvet crab was circulated to all RIFFs before the NIFF meeting.

**Action Point:** Provisional consensus to support the proposal however it will need to go back to the RIFFs for further discussion. DAFM to seek legal advice and come back to the NIFF to see if a public consultation would be required for the changes in the proposal to take place.

5. **Clarification from SFPA on penalty points system** – There is a lot of confusion on the coast regarding the penalty points system and Annex XXX of the Commission Implementing Regulation EU No 404/2011. It is unclear to fishermen that if they come in with fish exceeding the quota is it possible that they will they lose their licence. The SFPA gave clarification on the penalty points system in relation to the implementation of the EU points system for serious infringements of the Common Fisheries Policy. It is clear that it would be difficult for an inshore vessel to commit an offence sufficiently serious to merit being dealt with by penalty points.

**Action Point:** It was decided that the NIFF will not bring up the issue of penalty points with the Minister at this time. SFPA to send notification of breakfast briefings on the landing obligations to NIFF Secretary to inform the NIFF and the RIFFs. SFPA to update NIFF on any new developments.

#### 6. Technical Conservation Measures

The introduction of Technical Conservation Measures under FMN 741 of 2014 has effectively removed a pre-existing derogation for vessels under 110KW without any scientific advice. Given the lack of scientific evidence of the effect of a 110mm Square mesh panel on single rigged trawls towed by smaller and lower powered vessels the measure should be reversed for vessels of this size due to the disproportionate effect on these vessels. Any further or future technical conservation measures should not be introduced without consideration of this. In light of this smaller or lower powered vessels should be included in any current or future BIM or MI work informing technical conservation measures/ work plans.

**Action Point:** NIFF to outline the problems and forward to BIM Fisheries Technical Section. BIM to find out when the next meeting of the Industry Science Partnership is to take place and make sure NIFF is notified of any future meetings.

#### 7. Non- commercial potting

**Action Point:** The NIFF has decided to continue support for the non – commercial pot fishing legislation (S.I. No. 31 of 2016) but have taken on board the concerns raised by the NW RIFF. The NIFF will compile information over the summer (2016) on the effects of the legislation both positive and negative through the RIFFs and review the findings and report back in October 2016.

#### 8. Lobster Management

##### a. V-notching

- **Action Point:** NRIFF suggested that a strategic plan for the management of lobster based on mandatory v-notching should be devised. BIM explained that even if it were logistically possible and if made a legal requirement then it could not be grant

aided as it is at present. The need to evaluate the programme to see if it is the best way to use EMFF money was discussed. The NIFF would welcome a proposal from the NRIFF on a plan for the lobster fishery and its management that could be included in the strategy to be developed for the forums.

- **Action Point:** NW RIFF to speak to MI for advice on collecting the most relevant data from v-notching.

#### b. **Lobster Maximum Landing size review**

SW RIFF asked the following questions in regard to a review on the Maximum landing size?

Given that the maximum landing size is up for review at the end of 2016 what is the protocol for the review of the maximum landing size? Will the impact of the maximum size be assessed from an economic point of view as well as a biological one? Will other proposals for alternative conservation measures be assessed to provide options for achieving the level of egg production necessary to support current levels of fishing effort? Raising the minimum size might not be acceptable to all fishermen but there is a need to take a long term view.

**Action Point:** There is an opportunity for RIFFs to develop proposals on lobster management for discussion at NIFF.

### 9. **EMFF scheme – Feedback from the RIFFs**

BIM asked both the RIFFs and NIFF to examine the Inshore Conservation scheme and come back with any comments/queries. Discussion on types of projects that could be covered under the scheme was discussed.

#### **Action Points:**

- BIM reminded the NIFF to pay particular attention to the mandatory criteria of the scheme and asked if the NIFF felt that there were any other criteria that should be included.
- BIM confirmed that if a project was for more than a year it could be pre-approved with a budget formally approved on a year to year basis.
- A discussion took place on the National V-notching scheme and the grant aid for over 127 mm lobsters. BIM to see if it is possible to tell whether the v-notching of over 127 mm lobsters or the increase in grant rate has resulted in the increased total of grant aid paid. BIM stated that the scheme can be changed but it may take a number of months to do so.
- BIM confirmed that escape panels would be eligible for grant aid.
- BIM to finalise and open Inshore Conservation Scheme.

### 10. **P-Licenses**

NW RIFF brought up the issue of P-licenses and the fact that if you want to upgrade your vessel to a larger or more powerful one you can't use the P license capacity. You have to buy the capacity on the open market. DAFM gave the background to the P-license i.e. it was introduced to regularise people and allow them to work their way to buying a full polyvalent license.

**Action point:** Send Terms and Conditions of the P-license to NIFF members. The problems of the P-license were highlighted. NIFF requested that the members go back with the issue to their RIFFs for further discussion and possible proposals. Any forthcoming proposals would need to be circulated to all RIFFs before consideration at a NIFF meeting.

#### 11. Blue Fin Tuna

Irish Charter Skippers are looking for a catch and release recreational quota however as Ireland doesn't have a quota for a directed fishery for Blue Fin Tuna this is not possible at the present time. Ireland does have access to a small EU by-catch quota as part of the albacore tuna fishery and the inshore sector occasional catch a Blue Fin Tuna as by-catch. This by-catch quota cannot however be used for recreational or other sports fisheries, even in the context of catch and release since it does not allow the targeting of Bluefin Tuna.

**Action Point:** DAFM are investigating the possibility of Ireland participating in a scientific tag and release programme under ICCAT direction and will update the NIFF with any progress.

#### 12. Grant aided lifejackets - NIFF has brought up the following concerns regarding the grant aided lifejackets :

- a. the distance that has to be travelled to collect the lifejackets after the completion of the safety course – it can be up to 3 hours;
- b. the length of time (up to 2-3 weeks) between the course and be able to collect the lifejacket;
- c. the fact that each crew member has to collect their lifejacket individually instead of just one person collecting the jackets for a particular vessel;
- d. the lifejacket scheme is thought to be very user unfriendly;
- e. and could the lifejackets be distributed immediately follow the safety course.

**Action Point:** BIM to forward the queries to BIM training section for follow up.

#### 13. AOB

##### Running cost of tracker devices

NW RIFF brought up the cost of running a tracker device and asked if there was any other method that could be used.

**Action Point:** NW RIFF to ask NW RIFF secretary to enquire with the SFPA about the charging rate on tracker devices. The tracker data will be transferred from the MI to the SFPA before the end of the year.