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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL



Brussels, **17 FEB. 2017**  
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**North Western Waters AC**  
Mr Emiel Brouckaert  
Chair of the Executive Committee  
BIM, PO Box 12  
Crofton Road,  
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin  
IRELAND

**Subject: Management measures for Nephrops in the Porcupine Bank for 2017**

*Yr reference: Email from B. Schoute dated 30 November 2016*

Dear Mr. Brouckaert,

Thank you very much for the NWWAC advice dated 30 November 2016 on the management of Nephrops associated with the Porcupine bank.

As you know the Commission's proposal was examined by the Council of Ministers on 12 and 13 December 2016. Council decided to increase the sub-TAC to reflect the ICES MSY advice of 3100t. Council also decided that there should be no overall change in the management arrangements for this functional unit.

Let me explain the background of the Commission proposal and the decision by Council. As you note there are two management measures in place for Nephrops in the Porcupine Bank: a closed period and an 'of which allocation'. The STECF advice in 2013 (STECF PLEN-13-01) considered the functioning of the closed period and the use of a sub TAC and they noted the need to discourage high grading and misreporting. STECF further commented on the option of amending the timing of the closure to protect females. The NWWAC previously commented on the timing of the closure and you preferred an early closure period. Regrettably, neither STECF nor ICES were able to assess whether an earlier or a later closure would be the better measure. You also raised concerns over high grading. The scientific assessment however has not confirmed these concerns and continues to consider discarding as negligible; I therefore welcome the support of fishermen in providing any information on this issue to improve the scientific assessment.

In general we need to avoid however that removing the sub TAC poses the risk that we return to the same unsustainable situation we had in previous years, where vessels fished a high amount of their nephrops quotas in the Porcupine bank. As you know this has led to a serious decline in the Porcupine nephrops stock in previous years and it was this negative development that has led us to introduce the catch limitation in the Porcupine bank through the "of which clause".

Let me in the end thank you again for your constructive input. If you have any question on this reply, you may contact Evangelia Georgitsi, co-ordinator of the Advisory Councils ([evangelia.georgitsi@ec.europa.eu](mailto:evangelia.georgitsi@ec.europa.eu); +32.2.295.04.43).

Yours sincerely,

  
João AGUIAR MACHADO