



North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

Revised DRAFT management plan for rays and skates in ICES Sub-areas VI and VII

Last update: May 2012

Preamble

An initial proposal was put forward by the Irish industry in June 2011. The revised plan has been substantially altered, based on discussions held within two NWW RAC Focus Group meetings on September 2011 and February 2012. Scientific support in drafting this revision was provided by the Marine Institute from Ireland. However this does not imply that the plan, or any part thereof, is in accordance with the precautionary approach or consistent with obtaining high long term yield.

The intention of this draft is to reflect the views of the widest section of stakeholders. Any plan that is adopted by fisheries managers must be evaluated by ICES and STECF. The Commission has published a proposal for a TAC in 2012 that is 25% lower than the 2011 TAC.

The draft plan consists of an incremental approach, in three phases:

- Implement an interim TAC in 2012, based on current ICES advice, but taking into account stakeholders' reservations on some aspects of ICES advice.
- Based on updated ICES advice, in 2012, establish an interim TAC decision rule, and in collaboration with ICES, further develop a suite of adaptive measures for each species at appropriate regional/local scale for 2013 onwards.
- Achieve exploitation in line with an appropriate variant of maximum sustainable yield, from 2015 onwards.



DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SKATES AND RAYS – for discussion

Phase I (2012)

Depleted species

For the depleted species *Dipturus batis*, the common skate *Dipturus oxyrinchus* longnose skate, *D. nidarosiensis* Norwegian skate and *R. alba* white skate), a suite of measures shall be established as follows:

1. All specimens shall be returned alive to the sea immediately, to the extent possible,
2. Mandatory recording of all returned rays and skates, in the EC logbook.

For *Dipturus batis*, the common skate, the RAC is aware of new information that two separate species now exist; *D. flossada* blue skate, *D. intermedia* flapper skate. There is no ICES advice for these new species. Further information on the status of each of these species is required and ICES will be asked to provide such advice in 2012.

For all these species, proposals will be brought forward to establish science-industry partnerships to collect information on:

- Distribution of species
- Survival of returned specimens
- Refuges, nursery and spawning grounds
- Utility of seasonal closures

This information will be used to develop management measures, in phase 2, at the appropriate regional and spatial scale.

***Leucoraja naevus* Cuckoo ray**

Information from ICES suggests that this is a widely distributed species. Though ICES provides advice for three separate management units (IV; VI and VII; VIII and IX) it is stated that a single stock may span over IV, VI, VII and VIII. The stock status and advice varies from area to area. The advice is to reduce catch in VI and VII, but for unchanged catches in the other areas.

ICES will be asked to provide new advice on this species at the appropriate spatial scale. In the meantime a status quo catch could apply in VI and VII.



Raja undulata undulate ray

The RAC has examined the information available for this species. It is important to distinguish between a small isolated stock, on the SW coast of Ireland (VIIj and VIIb) and a larger more widely distributed population or populations, in the English Channel (VIIId and VIIe).

Proposals will be brought forward for tailored local-scale measures to afford maximum protection to the SW Ireland population.

For the remainder of the area, this species should be removed from the list of non-retained species, and the ICES advice of 2010 should be implemented for 2012: that there should be no target fishing unless information is made available to show that such fisheries are sustainable. This could include a by-catch provision.

Other *Raja* rays

For the remainder of the rays, caught in the mixed-species TAC, a status quo catch would apply in 2012, being consistent with the ICES advice.

Additional measures

Catch reporting should be on an individual species level, and no generic species reporting should take place.

Mandatory recording, in EC logbooks, of all discarded rays and skates shall apply from 2012 onwards.

Sample schemes shall be established for vessels under 10 m L.O.A. to obtain species specific landings and discards information.

By means of science/industry collaboration, possible experimentation and a request to ICES;

- Identify indicators that could be used achieve management in line with variants of maximum sustainable yield.
- Identify further research, and summarise existing knowledge, on the utility of Technical Conservation Measures (TCMs) that may be appropriate to increase survival of discarded rays.

Phase II (2013 and 2014)

The following procedure shall apply to TAC setting for 2013 and 2014.

1. Where there is evidence that any of the individual populations are overfished with respect to the fishing mortality that will deliver maximum sustainable yield (or are depleted to a low level compared with historic levels), a reduction in TAC as needed to reach the F_{msy} variant, but no greater than 15% would apply.
2. Where there is evidence that any of the individual populations are underfished with respect to the fishing mortality that will deliver maximum sustainable yield, an increase as needed to reach the F_{msy} variant, but no greater than 15%, would apply.
3. The considerations in paragraphs 1 and 2 override subsequent paragraphs. Until such time as ICES provides advice that can be used to implement paragraphs 1 and 2, paragraphs 4 and 5 will apply.
4. Where abundance information either indicates no change in abundance of all the reference stocks, or advice is not available or does not adequately reflect changes in stock abundance, an unchanged overall TAC for all species will apply.
5. Where ICES considers that representative stock abundance information exists, the following rule applies:
 - a. If the average estimated abundance of all the stocks in the last two years exceeds the average estimated abundance in the three preceding years by 20% or more, a 15% increase in TAC applies.
 - b. If the average estimated abundance of any of the stocks in the last two years is 20% or lower than the average estimated abundance in the three preceding years, a 15% decrease in TAC applies.

Additional measures

Stakeholders will work through the NWWWRAC to implement refined spatially appropriate management measures based on information collected in Phase I. These should include management at the appropriate regional and temporal scale, and pay attention to new information on the status of the two new skate species in the common skate species complex.

Stakeholders and scientists will develop, including through simulation, a suitable approach that can be used to set the TACs, consistent with variants of maximum sustainable yield. This process will be assisted by new FP7 Project "Myfish" and the ICES initiative on stock assessment methodologies. This will include requests to ICES for evaluation.

Data collection programmes, through industry/science partnerships, will be further enhanced to collect relevant data for assessment and management purposes.



Phase III (2015 and beyond)

Achieve management in line with variants of MSY, including requesting ICES for guidance.

Continue progress with industry/science collaborations.

The plan will be re-evaluated every third year.

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