

NWWRAC Meeting Report from Working Group 1 November 2005



NORTH WEST WATERS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING REPORT

**Working Group 1 - West of Scotland (ICES Vb & VI)
Tuesday 8th November 2005
2.00pm-5.30pm**

Agenda item 1: Welcome

Nomination and Election of the Working Group Chairman, Vice Chairman and Rapporteur

Sam Lambourn, Chairman of the NWWRAC welcomed all participants to the meeting. On 23rd November (following the Executive Committee meeting in Brussels on 22nd November) the Chairman will present to the Commission the agreed NWWRAC advice. The Chairman noted that all working groups were oversubscribed for membership (budget is for 21); the Executive Committee will appoint members at the November meeting, and a request was made that Working Group applicants consider seat-sharing or active observer status where appropriate.

Action: Members to review required membership status and respond to the Secretariat in time for the 22nd November Executive Committee.

Bertie Armstrong (UK) was elected by consensus for the position of Chair of the West of Scotland Working Group.

Victor Badiola (Spain) was elected by consensus for the position of Vice Chairman of the West of Scotland Working Group.

Kara Brydson (UK) was elected by consensus and with grateful thanks, for the position of Rapporteur for the West of Scotland Working Group.

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of Rules of Procedure

The Working Group Rules of Procedure were adopted by consensus.

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Agenda item 3: Priority issues for discussion

i. ICES Advice for Area VI and Vb

West Coast Prawns; the disparity between the scientific assessment of the Nephrops stocks and the TACs

Mike Armstrong (representing ICES) presented this item, stating commercial fishing data for West Coast Prawns is very poor. Previous advice had been given largely based on landing data, which had not contributed to accurate stock assessment. Fishery independent camera surveys had been used to improve assessment. ICES advice for 2006 is for no increase in effort, and for the fishery to be accompanied by mandatory programmes to collect fishery data. Discussion covered the connection with Cod recovery, noting industry opinion that little Cod was caught in Area VI. New assessment methods using TV were giving a better picture of prawn stocks, and a significant increase in prawn TAC for 2006 to facilitate full data collection was suggested. The necessity to examine alternative ways to manage the prawn stock was agreed.

Recommendations:

- WG1 calls for more accurate data collection on *Nephrops* based on new methodologies, which could lead to alternative and improved methods of stock management and an increase in the TAC.
- Effort capping is noted as necessary, to ensure that the mixed fishery does not impact on cod recovery.

Action: WG1 should pinpoint scientific documentation to support the discussion point that very little cod is caught in the Nephrops fishery.

Monkfish

Mike Armstrong presented the ICES advice, which is for no increase in fishing effort, and a reinforcement of detailed effort and catch data collection and mandatory recording in log books, discard recording, and review of TCM. There was considerable doubt about the quality of stock assessment for Northern Shelf Monkfish, and encouragement was taken from the efforts over the last 12 months to improve this. Previous advice was reiterated: to substantially improve the quality and quantity of data including the use of collaborative surveys, and to use the data to agree alternative management methods. Recognizing the Northern Shelf Monkfish as a single stock, there was discussion about the balance between Areas VI and IV. A TAC increase was seen as justified, again to facilitate proper logging, but the necessity for effort control was recognized.

Recommendations:

- WG1 calls for a new approach to the management of monkfish, which is a unique stock with unique problems (bycatch etc).
- Industry members propose an increased TAC in 2006, based on the commitment to logbooks, discard data and TCM. Many members would not accept effort limitations.
- Environmental members are concerned about TAC increases without appropriate control measures, and one member (WWF) believes there should not be any fishing of deepwater species due to bycatch/discarding. (Post meeting note – see below for deep water species)

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- The Scottish Executive (SE) suggestion for effort control should be made more transparent to other member nations to encourage joint proposals, although it is realistically too late to produce these for 2006. Notably, the Scottish Industry itself was not supporting the SE proposals which in any case had not had a response from the Commission.
- The potential impact of the Cod Recovery Programme on the monkfish fishery must be considered.
- The balance between the TACs for the North Sea and the West of Scotland waters should be considered next year.
- Some members welcomed the fact that joint stock management with Norway will not be proceeded with, as this is not believed to be in the interest of EC fishers.

ii. The Cod Recovery Programme (Effort management and Annex IV)

WG1 expressed thanks to Mike Armstrong for his assistance to this and other WGs, having inputted ICES advice in a way that has been both accurate and helpful.

There followed a discussion on the effectiveness of Annex IV in area VI. Since no recovery has been observed in this stock, ICES advises zero catch of cod in 2006. There was consensus that the CRP was simply not working in Areas IV and VI and some members felt that it was actually counter-productive. In contrast, some small unilateral measures taken by Ireland have had a disproportionately helpful effect.

Recommendations:

- WG1 calls for a review of Annex IV in relation to Area VI, which is a distinct area by character and may not suit the current 'one size fits all' approach. Some members feel Annex IV is demonstrably not working and is in fact counter-productive.
- Closed areas are one tool available, and which require good quality data, clear objectives an assessment of what an area is like before closure, economic assessment, analysis of displacement and bycatch, appropriate scientific studies, and an agreed exit strategy.
- WG1 suggests that a carefully worded request should go to the Commission to evaluate the last four years of Annex IV to record its effect on the cod stock biomass in Area VI.
- As for other species' management, in considering cod recovery measures, WG1 has a responsibility to consider not only those commercial species but also all affected species.

iii. Deep Sea Species

A discussion was held on ICES advice for 2006 which is a rollover based on no new data (the next assessment is in 2006). There was consensus that the data collection and assessment information is wholly inadequate, leading inevitably to insecure advice. It was agreed that every effort should be made to address this.

Recommendations:

- WG1 calls for better scientific data and advice to prepare sensible proposals on deep sea stocks. Lack of information makes it difficult to reach any consensus other than to participate in the process in the forthcoming year.
- Greater industry collaboration with ACFM, ACFA, and NEAFC is necessary to ensure the best data is available, and to encourage exchange between RACs and scientists.
- WG1 suggests that the Commission invests more in data collection, for example through observers and scientists onboard vessels (as on some French and Spanish vessels).

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Action:

- *WG1's work programme should identify practical action to help improve the quality of data, and to encourage scientific involvement in WG1 to help us make rational choices on the management of deep sea species.*

iv. Commission non-paper on deep-water bottom-set gillnet fisheries.

Recommendations:

- WG1 calls for urgent action to address the problems surrounding this fishery, including that the Commission should fund and implement a large-scale clean-up of lost and discarded nets immediately.
- WG1 could not reach a consensus on the Commission's proposed emergency moratorium.
- Industry members suggest sanctions against problem fleets rather than a total ban. Some industry members were against setting the precedence of banning a gear type.
- Environmental group members propose that WG1 support the emergency closure, to give space for an immediate clean up, and to consider the best control measures to put in place.
- WG1 believe that a suite of measures including (but not limited to) limiting net lengths, number of nets per vessel, tracking losses, limiting soak times, and using marker buoys, could be used to mitigate the problems associated with this fishery.

v. Rockall Haddock

Recommendations:

- WG1 has concerns surrounding the vulnerability of Rockall haddock stocks. Several members were in favour of a ban on fishing effort.

Action: *Paper from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to the Commission will be recirculated. Comments requested, to the WG1 Chair in time for 22nd November Executive Committee.*

Agenda item 4: Work Programme for 2006

Action: *The 2006 Work Programme for WG1 will be circulated for approval, with priorities being improving information exchange between industry and scientists, and encouraging scientists' participation on WG1. Video conferencing was proposed as a mechanism to encourage scientists' involvement.*

Agenda item 5: AOB

Papers for consideration in future WG1 meetings should be with the secretariat one month in advance of meetings to allow for translation.