



Ms Isabel Maene
Diensthoofd Visserij - Vlaamse overheid
Koning Albert II-laan 35 bus 40
1030 Brussel
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, 12 May 2022

Dear Ms Maene,

Subject: Advice on best practice measures for the management of skates and rays in the North Western Waters and the North Sea

In previous years, the joint Focus Group Skates & Rays between the North Western Waters AC and the North Sea AC collected and collated available information on the following topics:

- best practice measures in use,
- measures potentially implemented in the future,
- an overview of ongoing trials,
- proposed research.

This advice was submitted on 01 May 2020 ([link](#)) to both the NWW Member States Group and the Scheveningen Group, as well as on 26 April 2021 ([link](#)).

Since last year's update, several projects are underway or have concluded, including:

- Cuckoo Ray Survival trial, Bord Iascaigh Mhara ([link](#))
- Bridging knowledge gaps for sharks and rays in the North Sea ([link](#))
- Raywatch ([link](#))

In addition, the Advisory Councils submitted a request to the Commission for updated scientific advice on skates and rays in May 2021 ([link](#), and [COM response](#)). This culminated in the ACs' successful contribution to the setting up of an STECF Expert Working Group on Skates & Rays with the aim of reviewing developments in detail following the last update in 2017. STECF proposes to conduct this group during the week 26-30 September ([link](#)).

We believe that the work of the STECF EWG as well as the results from the above-mentioned research projects will result in additional information regarding the management of skates and rays in the North Western Waters as well as the North Sea, and will update the previous advice accordingly once new best practice management options have been identified.



In the meantime, NWWAC and NSAC members strongly believe that the harmonisation of skates and rays identification guides would greatly assist fishers on the ground in their day-to-day activities. Several publications are available online from various individual organisations which could form the basis for a joint publication covering multiple Member States ([link](#)). Therefore, we recommend that work is carried out in developing a harmonised publication for distribution across the North Sea and NWW Member States which ideally would also involve identification training for fishers.

The ACs stand ready to assist the Member States in this endeavour. Thank you for your attention on this matter, we look forward to a continued appreciated cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
Chairman of the NWWAC