



Information Note regarding Porcupine Bank (FU 16) Nephrops

Author: Eibhlín O'Sullivan

Date: January 2013

In 2009 in response to scientific data suggesting a decline in the Porcupine Bank (FU 16) Nephrops stock the NWWRAC put forward a proposal for a seasonal closed area for the stock at the initiative of the fishing Industry. The proposal was that a specified area in the FU 16 would be closed for the period 1st of May until the 31st of July which in accordance with the scientific data was the best time for such a closure. Based on this proposal the Commission implemented a seasonal closure for this area in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012.

However at the December Council 2010 despite the implementation of the seasonal closure and before any assessment of the effectiveness of the closure could be carried out the Council implemented an “of which” restriction in relation to the amount of Area VII nephrops quota which could be taken from FU 16 on the basis of the continued perception that the stock continued to be at a low level.

In order to obtain further information on the state of the Nephrops in FU 16 in July 2010 an annual commercial trawl survey was instigated in the area as part of the Industry Science Partnership between the Irish Fishing Industry and the Irish Marine Institute. This survey was repeated in 2011 and 2012 and the evidence from the survey indicated that the seasonal closure was having the desired impact and the state of the stock appeared to be in a considerably better condition than previously thought.

In June 2012 at the instigation of the Irish fishing Industry the Irish Marine Institute carried out an under water TV survey to allow the absolute size of the stock in FU 16 be more accurately assessed and utilised this together with the data from the 2012 Commercial Trawl survey to issue revised advice in relation to FU 16 in November 2012.

Both of these surveys indicated that the Porcupine Bank Nephrops stock appears to have recovered and on foot of this revised advice the NWWRAC issued a position paper in December 2012 putting forward a proposal to shorten the seasonal closure and remove the “of which restriction”. The paper set out a mechanism utilising the size and exploitation rate of stock for determining the duration of the seasonal closure.



In addition the paper utilised a similar mechanism for determining the necessity of the imposition of the “of which” restriction given that the stock had recovered and the recommended TAC was in fact higher than the 10 year average landings.

This paper was forwarded to both the Commission and the various Member State Administrations and at the December Council of Ministers meeting it was decided to shorten the season closure to one month duration and a commitment was given to look at the removal of the “of which” restriction.

Given the apparent recovery of the stock we are of the view that the “of which” restriction should be removed as there is no evidence that it has contributed to the recovery of the stock and in fact there is evidence it has led to displacement of effort to other areas. We are aware that the Area VII Nephrops stock is due to be benchmarked by ICES in February of this year and would propose that if the benchmark confirms the state of the FU 16 stock is in a healthy state that the NWWRAC would reiterate its proposal in relation to the removal of the “of which” restriction for FU 16.