

**North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council
(NWW RAC)**

**Working Group 2
Western Approaches And Celtic Sea (ICES VII except a,d&e)**

**Tuesday the 16th of May 2006
0930hrs – 1300hrs
Glasgow**

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted by consensus.

Adoption of Minutes

Following an intervention from the French delegation regarding translation issues at the previous meeting the minutes were adopted.

Deepwater Gillnet Ban

The working group heard that meetings had been held with the Commission on 7 March and 7 April. (Minutes attached for information).

In essence the Commission had accepted the NWW RAC position that hake vessels should be excluded from the ban and that an amendment to the TAC and Quota regulation was the simplest way of doing this.

With regard to the Monk and Deepwater Shark fisheries there was to be a scientific observer programme in order to generate new data for the STECF meeting in July. This was felt to be of particular importance in developing a future management plan for these fisheries.

It was noted that there had been some slight confusion surrounding the meeting with the Commission on the 7 April, however on this occasion the NWW RAC position was transmitted clearly to the Commission.

However it was agreed that at NWW RAC co-ordinated meetings the position of representatives of the RAC must be that of the NWW RAC and not that of individuals. It was agreed that a protocol should be drafted to ensure clarity of understanding in the roles of NWW RAC representatives and observers at future meetings.

Marking and Identification of Passive Fishing Gears

The working group heard that the issue of marking and identification of passive gear has not progressed very much since the 7 of March meeting with the Commission, despite the concerns of the NWW RAC being made clear. However, there was to be an expert meeting some time in July and it was

agreed that it was important that the group was represented at any such meeting.

It was further agreed that a letter should be sent immediately from the secretariat to the Commission to remind them of our concerns regarding operational safety and that the NWW RAC wished to be involved in any expert meetings on this subject.

Michael Walsh informed the group that his organisation were involved in carrying out trials with gear marking and promised that he would send the NWW RAC the report, once completed.

Pingers

Again the group heard that the Commission had received the NWW RAC position at the meeting of 7 March. Subsequently a technical expert meeting had been held on 20 April.

It was noted that the problem with this regulation remains, that there is a requirement of owners to fit the device but the device is not fit for purpose. It is clear that the Commission does not want to take it back to the Council. However the Commission are expected to respond to the Technical expert group of 20 April and that might offer an opportunity to influence change.

The group identified that there is an underlying problem with the development of policy from the Commission. It was suggested that regulations, which presume to change gear, should be thoroughly tested on commercial vessels before implementation to avoid the problems encountered at the moment. It was agreed that this could be pursued further through the simplification agenda.

It was clear that the issues above would require more work and it was felt important that the NWW RAC kept them on the agenda and continued to work to resolve them.

Horizontal Issues

It was noted that there were a number of issues that overlapped working groups and that it was not the best use of time to discuss the same things twice or three times. It was agreed that the Executive Committee should look at this issue and propose a practical way of dealing with horizontal issues that avoided unnecessary repetition.

Proposals for Trials on Albacore Tuna Driftnet Fishery

Jason Whooley summarised his proposal outline. (Attached for information).

He highlighted that this was an objective proposal to conduct trials looking at the tuna drift net fishery. It was a pro-active proposal that reflected that technology had moved on from the days of the ban. He reiterated that this proposal was for a trial and not complete re-opening.

The discussions and debate following were extensive and wide ranging however, the following key points emerged.

The majority of the group wanted to develop the proposal further, seeing it as an objective and genuine piece of research where ambiguity still exists.

The Spanish delegation from LUGO and ANASOL were not prepared to support the proposal. They had reservations about drift netting in general and felt that it was not prudent to investigate the possibility of re-opening this fishery even in a limited way. In addition they raised the issue of gear conflict and marketing in certain areas.

WWF stated that they did not support this proposal; it was not just about cetacean by-catch in their eyes but also the by-catch of turtles, seabirds and sharks. (This issue was disputed by many of the group who had been involved in the fishery.)

The group felt that it was important for the integrity of the NWW RAC that this issue be discussed at the Executive Committee. There was a clear majority in favour of developing the proposal further. Most felt it was necessary that further work be done on this issue however there was a minority (WWF, LUGO, ANASOL) that felt the opposite.

Despite this being an emotive issue it was felt that the NWW RAC should be open to considering controversial issues such as this. The albacore tuna driftnet ban deserves a full scientific evaluation and that maybe the NWW RAC should look to ICES and STECF to evaluate this. The NWW RAC should look at this in a rational and objective way.

Twine Thickness.

The group reviewed the letter sent by the Spanish on the issue of inspection procedure for the determination of twine thickness. (A copy is attached for information) A number of concerns were raised by various members of the group that had already been highlighted in the ANASOL letter.

It was noted that there was a real issue here and underlying it was a fundamental problem, the absence of a dialogue between the Commission and sector.

It was agreed that this issue fitted into the work of the Technical Conservation Measures (TCM) focus group furthermore it was suggested that an invitation to the enforcement part of the Commission would be useful to begin a dialogue on issues like twine thickness, as well as wider issues of enforcement regarding TCMs.

It was agreed to bring it to the Executive Committee's attention that there was a problem with article 19 of the EC Regulation 129/2003 and that its strict implementation is detrimental to the fleet. Furthermore that this was an issue of priority that should be included in the work of the TCM focus group.

Ecosystem Based Management in the Celtic and Irish Seas

This agenda item was included for information purposes. It was agreed that the NWW RAC required further information on the paper and that the NWW RAC should be consulted on such work.

As a horizontal issue this was once again referred to the Executive Committee to consider how best to engage and move forward on this important issue. It was reiterated that the NWW RAC should be involved in this project to ensure proper consideration is given to all stakeholders.

Any Other Business

Electronic Logbooks

Following concerns raised it was agreed that The Executive Committee should write to the Commission requesting more information and clarity on technical status, confidentiality and cost implications. This was of extreme importance as the Commission are seeking to implement electronic logbooks very soon.

Working Group Venues

Jacques Pichon suggested that working group meetings might be more economical and less time consuming if they were held in capital cities. The secretariat agreed to consider this.

Paul Trebilcock
2 June 2006