

Wild Wrasse Harvesting

Consultation on Proposed new Mandatory Fishing Measures

March 2020



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Wild Wrasse Harvesting Consultation on Proposed new Mandatory Fishing Measures

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to seek views about whether the Scottish Government should introduce mandatory measures to control the harvesting of live wrasse for the salmon farming industry.

Background and Introduction

Working with the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO), in May 2018 the Scottish Government introduced a package of voluntary measures as a basis for managing the wrasse fishery. For ease of reference, the agreed Voluntary Control Measures for the Live Capture of Wild Wrasse for Scottish Salmon Farms are reproduced in Annex A.

The measures include seasonal closure of the fishery, restrictions over the number of traps vessels may use, controls over the design and deployment of traps and specifications designed to protect fish welfare and improve mortality rates. While Scotland has opted for voluntary measures, other UK areas such as South West England have introduced enforceable legislation to manage the wrasse fishery.

The important role played by wrasse in controlling lice in salmon farms is already recognised. What is equally important is having confidence that wild caught wrasse are being fished sustainably, with effective management in place.

The voluntary measures have been kept under review and, after being in place for nearly two years, it is now an appropriate time to review their effectiveness and consider if any changes are required. Marine Scotland has undertaken a light touch internal review, and engaged with the SSPO and salmon farm operators in undertaking this work. Our conclusion is that most of the original voluntary measures were operating satisfactorily, however that there is scope to improve the reporting of wrasse fishing activity and merit in introducing more formal harvesting measures - which would bring the wrasse fishery more into line with other Scottish fisheries.

Marine Scotland therefore propose introducing mandatory controls covering the reporting and practice of wild wrasse harvesting. Under the

new arrangements, we will issue to eligible wrasse fishermen a new permit which will set conditions for participating in the fishery.

Marine Scotland would like to hear your views on these proposals.

Timescales

The Scottish Government generally allows 12 weeks for consultations. However, this consultation is concerned with a specific and limited issue which will essentially formalise measures which have been in place on a voluntary basis for some time. In addition, considerable engagement has already been undertaken with some of the key stakeholder groups.

Marine Scotland would therefore welcome responses requested by Friday 10th April 2020.

It is intended that the new measures will be operational for the 2020 wrasse harvesting season.

Eligibility criteria for new permit applications

To obtain a permit, fishermen will need to be able to demonstrate:

- Proven track record of wrasse harvesting and submitting returns over the last 2 years
- Evidence of having an appropriate contract with a salmon farm operator to supply wrasse. (All fishermen currently supplying wrasse must be under contract with a farm and the contract binds them to the voluntary measures).

Marine Scotland may also consider additional permits for new entrants to the fishery.

Aims of the Proposal

The proposal introduces new mandatory fisheries management measures in addition to the current voluntary measures with an aim to:

- Ensure wrasse fishermen provide to Marine Scotland more direct and comprehensive information about wrasse harvesting activity.
- Enable enforcement of the proposed management measures, if required

- Enhance the knowledge base relating to the fishery by requiring the acceptance of observers, electronic tracking or remote electronic monitoring of vessels.

Monitoring

The new mandatory measures will help provide more comprehensive information about wild wrasse harvesting. Marine Scotland, working with the SSPO, salmon farm operators and fishermen will monitor developments keeping control measures such as landing sizes and eligibility criteria under review, seeking expert advice from Scottish Natural Heritage as required.

Proposed Benefits

The overall goal of the proposal is to maintain a healthy wild wrasse stock that is fished sustainably, and thereby enable continued access to wrasse by the aquaculture sector. The new management measures will enable the Scottish Government, working with industry and fishermen, to build a better knowledge and understanding of the fishery and demonstrate sound controls over harvesting.

Proposed Fisheries Management Measures

We are proposing tighter controls over certain aspects of the fishery including:

- mandatory compliance with the existing voluntary control measures
- licence conditions making non-compliance an offence
- new conditions about data reporting direct to Marine Scotland
- new requirements for inshore vessel monitoring including tracking and remote electronic monitoring where required
- new requirements to facilitate observer programmes when required.

Mandatory Fishing Controls

- Adherence to season closing dates, 1 December to 1 May
- Reporting to Marine Scotland of the numbers of wrasse caught and returned by species
- Minimum and Maximum landing sizes. Catch size limitations will be as follows:

- Small species including Goldsinny (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*)
Rock Cook (*Centrolabrus exoletus*) and Corkwing
(*Symphodus melops*)
 - Minimum size: 12cm to Maximum size: 17cm
 - Large species including Ballan (*Labrus bergylta*) and
Cuckoo (*Labrus mixtus*)
 - Minimum size: 12cm to Maximum size: 24cm
- Only traps specifically designed to target and catch live wrasse and ensure their welfare will be used.
 - Otter exclusion devices, such as a fixed-eye aperture, will be used at the entrance to the trap and traps must feature escape hatches
 - Traps to be lifted at a maximum rate of 6 metres per minute
 - Traps should not be deployed / lifted when the water temperature is >17°C.
 - A maximum of 250 traps per vessel may be deployed
 - Requirement to accept observers if requested
 - Requirement to have REM or other appropriate inshore vessel monitoring if requested

Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree that the mandatory fishing controls set out below should be introduced for wild wrasse harvesting?

- Season closing dates, 1 December to 1 May
- Minimum and Maximum landing sizes.
 - Small species including Goldsinny (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*)
Rock Cook (*Centrolabrus exoletus*) and Corkwing
(*Symphodus melops*)
 - Minimum size: 12cm to Maximum size: 17cm
- Large species including Ballan (*Labrus bergylta*) and Cuckoo
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- Traps to be lifted at a maximum rate of 6 metres per minute
- Traps should not be deployed / lifted when the water temperature is $>17^{\circ}\text{C}$.
- A maximum of 250 traps per vessel may be deployed
- Requirement to accept observers if requested
- Requirement to have REM or other appropriate inshore vessel monitoring if requested

2. Do you agree the eligibility criteria for permit applications as set out above?

Contact

Email: Inshore Fisheries and Coastal Communities Team

Voluntary Control Measures for the Live Capture of Scottish Wild Wrasse for Salmon Farms

1. Annual Fishery Closure

1.1. The fishery is closed from 1st December until 1st May

2. Landing Sizes

Catch size limitations will be as follows:

Small species including Goldsinny (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*) Rock Cook (*Centrolabrus exoletus*) and Corkwing (*Symphodus melops*)

2.1. Minimum size: 12cm to Maximum size: 17cm

Large species including Ballan (*Labrus bergylta*) and Cuckoo (*Labrus mixtus*)

2.2. Minimum size: 12cm to Maximum size: 24cm

3. Information and data gathering

3.1. Maintain and supply records of numbers, linked to total weights of wrasse caught and reported on the FISH1 Form.

In addition to data supplied on the FISH1 Form to local fishery offices:

3.2. Supply information on numbers of under and over-sized fish returned, by species for the first 20 traps deployed each week. This must relate to a specific entry in the FISH1 Form (location, total pots hauled, total weight by species).

4. Wrasse Traps

4.1. Only traps specifically designed to target and catch live wrasse and ensure their welfare will be used

4.2. Otter exclusion devices, such as a fixed-eye aperture, will be used at the entrance to the trap

4.3. Traps will be lifted at a maximum rate of 6m/minute

4.4. Traps should not be deployed / lifted when the water temperature is >17°C

5. Effort control

5.1. Fishermen will not deploy more traps than can be hauled in one day and in any event not exceeding 250 traps.

5.2. A list of boats catching wrasse for supply to the salmon farming sector will be maintained by the SSPO.

6. Agreements and due diligence

6.1. All fishermen catching wrasse will have an agreement in place to supply wrasse to a salmon farming operator or via an intermediary.

6.2. As a minimum, this needs to state the intention to meet the agreed voluntary measures.

6.3. All fishing operations will be subject to an annual audit. An annual internal audit by the receiving farming company should be carried out to ensure the fishermen are meeting the conditions of these voluntary measures and agreed supply conditions.

7. Standards

7.1. Fishermen and fish farmers should meet the requirements of the industry's Code of Good Practice for Scottish Finfish Aquaculture. This details requirements to be met by both the fishermen and the fish farmers when catching and deploying wild wrasse in salmon farms.

7.2. All wild wrasse being caught for use on salmon farms should meet the latest requirements in the RSPCA Assured standards. This standard requires that the wrasse are caught and handled with the highest regard to their welfare. This ensures that wrasse are in the best possible condition for deployment on the farms, thus ensuring they are used as efficiently as possible. This, consequently, helps minimise the number of fish that need to be taken from the wild.

8. Science and research

8.1. The wrasse fishing sector and the salmon farming sector agree to assist and cooperate with Marine Scotland Science to further understand the wild fishery for wrasse in Scotland and ensure its sustainability.

8.2. Work to identify spawning areas and times will be undertaken to ensure protection of caught species during peak breeding activity.

Responding to this Consultation

We are inviting responses to this consultation by Friday 10th April 2020.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (<http://consult.gov.scot>). Access and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/wild-wrasse-harvesting>. You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of Friday 10th April 2020.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form to:

Inshore Fisheries and Coastal Communities
Scottish Government
Area 1B North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://beta.gov.scot/privacy/>

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <http://consult.gov.scot>. If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted,

please send them to the contact address above or at Inshore@gov.scot.

Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: <http://consult.gov.scot>. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

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RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
<https://beta.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No



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