

Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

The Forgotten Sea



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Turning a blind eye ?

The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN) is concerned that the Scottish Government is turning a blind eye to the destruction of fish stocks and marine biodiversity of the West and South West coasts of Scotland because of the lucrative returns from the destructive langoustine industry.

Twenty species of fish which were once regarded as abundant in Scottish waters have become locally extinct or reduced to the point where only juvenile specimens are caught.

Whilst haddock and whiting stocks are 'At Risk' and cod are at their lowest ever observed levels the discard levels based on the governments latest figures show 15+ million fish are discarded dead into the Clyde each year.

ICES advice October 2007

The continued discarding of small, juvenile fish will be a serious impediment to future stock rebuilding.

ICES Advice - Unless the Haddock and Langoustine industry demonstrate zero bycatches of cod, these fisheries needs to be substantially reduced.

ICES has previously concluded that a precautionary recovery plan must include an adaptive element, implying that fisheries for cod must remain closed until an initial recovery of the cod Sustainable Stock Biomass has been proven.

Such an element of zero catch is not included in the existing plan. ICES therefore consider the recovery plan to be not consistent with the precautionary approach.

The ICES whiting advice October 2007 states; the state of the stock is uncertain. Long-term information on the historical yield and catch composition all indicate that the present stock size is low and the Haddock stock is currently harvested outside safe biological limits

Marine Directorate all at sea

The Scottish Marine Directorate stated in October 2007 "The West of Scotland management measures taken so far have not had as positive an effect as in the North Sea. We cannot be sure why.

It seems ICES know why, the question is; Why isn't the Marine Directorate following ICES advice?

All effort – no result

A recent study FRS showed that trawlers were struggling to catch more than one cod, haddock, or whiting per hour in many areas from the Clyde to the Inner Solway.

The situation is no better for the rays. The Fisheries Science Partnership ray survival report: 2007 stated, The status of several skate and ray stocks is of concern, with some species classified as depleted while others are locally extirpated.

Why are stocks failing to recover ?

Previous studies from the Fisheries Research Services (FRS) suggest that the cod and whiting stocks of the Clyde and South West Scotland belong to residential spawning groups.

90% of tagged fish are recovered within 80km of coastal release sites.

Other studies suggest that there is little movement if any, between the western and eastern Irish Sea stocks and furthermore, no cod tagged in the Celtic Sea were recovered from the Irish Sea,

Conclusion :: If cod and whiting stocks are in resident spawning groups, with little if no cross-over from other shoals, and the Langoustine fishery discard levels stays at current levels then its hard to see where the necessary spawning stock is going to come from.

Impact on Sea Angling

Before the stocks were destroyed, there were scores of angling charter / hire boats, tackle shops and service industries catering to the demands of sea anglers who came from all over the UK and Europe – there are now very few.

Sea angling could provide a major growth opportunity for many fragile coastal economies.

SSACN would like to know when the government will stop putting short-term financial gain for the catching sector before the continued destruction of the "forgotten sea".

References

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