

Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network



The Collapsing Clyde

November 2007

In just a few years

Marine resources are finite yet successive Government Ministers have failed to address the wasteful practices associated with the commercial demands on them.

The object of this paper is to summarize how the Clyde whitefish fisheries were wiped out and how the impact the Clyde nephrops fishery is preventing any chance of recovery.

All fish stocks reduced to the point where the Clyde roundfish fishery was no longer economically viable.

The herring fisheries in the Clyde area were exhausted in the early 20th century

In the early 70s the cod stocks of Lochs Long, Goil and the Holy Loch were seriously reduced by the activities of commercial long-liners.

This was compounded following the lifting of the trawling ban in 1984 which resulted in the seasonal stocks of Saithe in Lochs Fyne and Long being decimated.

The nephrops fishery

Trawlers then went on to target what is now the area's main commercial catch, known variously as Nephrops, Norway Lobster, Langoustine, Scampi and Dublin Bay Prawn.

9kg of discards for every 1kg of nephrops landed.

For many years it was an ungoverned fishery where discards reached such a level that on average there were 9kg of discards for every 1kg of nephrops.

The effect on the diversity of fish stocks within the Clyde is even more apparent in the analysis of the fish species discarded. The following table shows which species

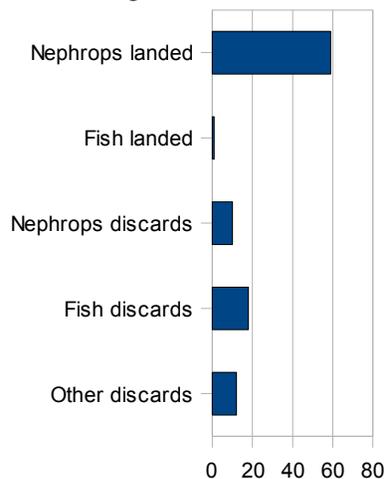
were the common discards in 1998, an 'X' indicates those no longer present in any quantity in 2006 - of particular note is Norway Pout which at one time were as prolific as Whiting.

Table 1- Discards League Table

1998 Species In order	Avg. Length Inches	2006 Position
Whiting	7.5	1
Poor Cod	6.0	X
Long Rough Dab	5.5	X
Hake	7.5	5
Norway Pout	6.7	X
Witch	7.9	X
Plaice	7.5	3
Common Dab	6.7	X
Cod	8.8	4
Dragonet	8.2	X
Herring	8.8	X
Haddock	8.1	2

Discard levels have improved a little since 1998 but it is still 40%, broken down as shown below.

Landings and Discards



Discards destroy stocks and jobs

The landings and discards figures were taken from a Clyde Fisheries Project study.

What the study did not point out was that an 18% fish discard rate means :

- **Over 15,000,000 fish are discarded every year in the Clyde.**
- **The average weight of each is 2 oz.**
- **The fish landed were immature and could not have bred.**

Continually wiping out these juvenile fish has reduced fish stocks to the point where there is insufficient to recover to their original levels or ensure their survival.

Twenty species, once regarded as being abundant in the Clyde are now locally extinct or reduced to the point where only juvenile specimens are caught.

Those stocks once made the Clyde one of Europe's premier sea angling destinations with scores of angling charter / hire boats, tackle shops and supporting services catering to the needs of sea anglers.

Now most of these are gone; what should potentially be a growth opportunity for fragile coastal economies is being lost.

£20+ million / yr is lost from the Scottish economy due to the lack of fish stocks for anglers.

Time for Government action

A number of gear modifications can be made to increase the selectivity of trawls and thus decrease the level of discards.

Good husbandry of our resources should be an essential role of Government but they have consistently failed to show the political will to address the destruction of fish stocks caused by the poor policies and practices of the nephrops fishery.

Scotland needs to get 'Best Value' from its' resources – not see them wasted to support outdated and outmoded practices.