

Minutes **BGMCF - Meeting 7**

Date: 17th July 2010

Venue: BIM, Crofton Road, Dun Laoghaire

In attendance: Mr Donal Maguire – Chairman of the BGMCF
Mr Michael Murphy – Secretariat
Ms Joanne Gaffney – Secretariat
Mr Kenny Parker - DARD
Mr Greg Griffiths - DARD
Ms Roni Hawe – DAFF
Mr Declan Quigley - SFPA
Mr George Golden – Industry Rep Carlingford/Dundrum
Mr Michael O’Driscoll–Vessel owner and operators association
Mr Arthur McCarthy–Rep Castlemaine/Shannon/Cork/Clew

Apologies: Mr. Richie Flynn – IFA
Mr Michael Havelin – Industry Rep. Foyle
Mr John McLaughlin – Industry Rep Swilly
Mr Stephen Kelly – Industry Rep Kinsale/Waterford/Wexford
Mr Barry Fox – Loughs Agency

Donal Maguire welcomed all to the meeting.

1) Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted

Matters arising from minutes of 6th Forum meeting held on 26th of April 2010.
O.Tully was not able to attend this meeting but has indicated that he will try to attend the next meeting of the Forum. Matt Service of AFBI will also be invited to attend.

Liz Sides of NPWS had sent a letter of regret to the forum; she will not be attending today’s meeting.

RH suggested that Ollie Tully would be best placed to answer the groups’ questions on the practical implementation of Natura measures for the seed fishery.

GGolden noted that the same questions have been tabled since the setting up of the forum and that zero progress had been made on some of these e.g. the fact that NPWS had refused to attend any meeting to date to answer simple questions on the designation process. A request should be again sent to Liz Sides requesting attendance

at a meeting in September/October and to ask her, what dates are suitable to her and to schedule a meeting around that date.

2) Seed Mussel Fishery 2010

DM went through figures to date from seed fishing 2010. 6,000 tonnes gross 5,282 net tonnage with roughly a 50:50 split between North and South fisheries. He pointed out that there has been good compliance with the new SMS reporting system to date.

DQ said that he still had to follow up on some information regarding log sheets, and that it was a licence condition that these sheets needed to be submitted within 48 hours of fishing and relaying. He asked the industry representatives present to remind all operators that log sheets should be sent directly to the Howth office of the SFPA marked for the attention of Declan Quigley.

(a) Castlemaine Harbour Seed Mussel Fishery

DM stated that the required appropriate assessment had been carried out and had been sent to consultees. The 2010 assessment is still an interim assessment but it is hoped that next year there will be a full assessment undertaken. The current consultation period will end on the 13th August, with a technical advisory committee meeting (TAC) taking place within the following week subject to scheduling. The Minister will then receive a report on the position of the TAC and a recommendation from the Department. The Minister will then make a decision on the opening of the fishery.

RH pointed out that the purpose of the TAC meeting is to seek consensus to make a recommendation to the Minister, rather than to engage in a further consultation exercise. The consultation period of 1 month is being undertaken prior to the TAC in an effort to expedite the process. It is hoped that a pre-TAC consultation meeting with the ENGO's would allow the TAC to move faster and avoid a situation where concerns are drip fed into the system at a late stage.

DM noted that the assessment was positive and based on a much larger dataset than last year. He acknowledged that the system is quite long and complicated but it has been established to demonstrate transparency in the decision making process. He also noted the urgency of finalising a decision on the opening.

Responding to an industry query, RH identified that the membership of the TAC was comprised of two members of the environmental pillar, two representatives of the fishery and representatives from DAFF, SFPA, BIM and the MI.

(b) Seed Mussel Fishery in other NATURA Sites

To date there has been no seed found in any other Natura sites

(c) Northern Ireland

KP acknowledged the difference in the tonnages predicted in the AFBI survey and the actual tonnage extracted from the NI seed area. He stated that AFBI had examined their data and identified that they had failed to apply a dredge efficiency correction. Once this was corrected the predicted tonnages were a much better fit to the actual tonnage fished.

He also indicated that AFBI intend to do move video and acoustic survey work in the coming weeks.

(3) Surveying in NI waters

JG informed the group that there is to be wider industry survey off the Co. Down coast with DARD/AFBI observers onboard. It is hoped that up to six vessels will be involved and surveying will be carried out during the early August tides. Industry along with both DARD and AFBI are to hold a meeting in advance to finalise arrangements. The survey will take one to two days depending on information gathered on the first day GG suggested that it was a good idea to keep the second day available for surveying and that he welcomes the amount of work that has been done on scheduling the survey.

(4) Surveying in ROI waters

DQ reminded all industry members that the SFPA must be informed if industry wishes to survey, outside the seed fishing tides. The SFPA will issue permits once notified.

DM stated that the T Burke survey vessel would be doing more seed mussel prospecting on the east coast once it finishes surveying in Castlemaine.

RH queried whether the information from searching is provided to all from industry surveys? DQ stated that this is not happening at present.

(5) Stock Tracking

JG stated that the SMS seemed to work well with regard to returns. These have been cross checked with black box data and there was a good correlation between observed fishing activity and the returns. DM in welcoming this new development stated that this is a key start to the gathering of reliable statistics on the mussel seed fishery, statistics which will become ever more important in the future for a wide variety of reasons.

(6) Alien Species

(a) Embargo in the Netherlands

JG informed the group that the Fisheries Ministry and the Importers in the Netherlands have developed a new protocol to that will hopefully facilitate the issuing of a new import licence, but that this has not been agreed to date. The Dutch importers had

suggested via their Irish customers that it would be in the Irish industries interest to bring more pressure to bear from different sources in Ireland on the Dutch authorities to speed up the issuing of the required licence. MOD suggested that the legal situation should be investigated, and more information needed regarding scientific aspects. JG pointed out that both AFBI and MI have assessed the available information from the judgement and the new protocol and given opinions on both.

DM suggested that Francis O' Byrne be invited to the next forum meeting to answer scientific questions. JG said that F. O Byrne of the MI had stated that the species listed as being of concern were not an issue for Ireland.

DM and GG agreed that this issue could be more financial in basis, for certain elements of the industry in the Netherlands.

GG suggested that serious input from Ireland was required to sort out this issue.

DM agreed that this issue would be followed up on and assessed on an ongoing basis.

(b) Surveillance Programme

In NI there was good information at present. In ROI it was still being worked on. Any surveillance programme for Alien species in the marine environment is likely to be very expensive and Industry may need to contribute to these costs in the future.

KP suggested we seek clarification on what information is required and how this needs to be formatted to aid the issuing of an import licence.

(c) Crepidula

JG has been working with Martin Syvret on a proposal to scale up Seafish's original brine treatment project to assess the practical implementation of this method on a commercial scale. Some funding with regard to Belfast Lough is being looked at through DARD's Collective Operations programme under EFF. JG agreed to submit an expression of interest on this project proposal.

GG noted that this problem had been flagged up for some time and was concerned that not much progress appeared to have been made. JG pointed out that all the disparate elements for such a project had to be drawn together and with the number of different parties involved, delays were inevitable.

(7) Seed Allocation Review

DM pointed out that while anomalies in allocations had been reviewed that the overall system of allocations had not and that it had become very evident in the course of the work of the sub-committee that an overall external audit needed to be undertaken covering a period of up to five years. He asked that industry prepare themselves for such an audit to be carried out so that the allocations system could be fundamentally recalibrated to bring it back into touch with what was actually happening around the coast. He noted that it was the firm intention of the controlling authorities to overhaul the allocation arrangements as a matter of urgency over the next period so that previous anomalies and flaws in the approach were eradicated such that the new

system would accurately reflect the reality of what was actually happening on the ground.

MOD pointed out that nobody had received revised allocations as yet. He was informed that it would happen soon in cases of adjustments.

RH said that relevant producers would hear from the department in next week or so.

(8) MSC Certification/ ecolabing

JG has obtained four initial quotes for MSC certification on the Island of Ireland (Prices ranged from €44,000 to €147,000 depending on the range of services to be provided by the certifying body. All companies have indicated that assessing on an all island basis will be cheaper than for two different jurisdictions to undergo assessment individually. It must be noted that at present funds can only be applied for in NI only as the ROI operational programme is not yet open.

DM noted that in the interim as a measure to try to maintain market access pending MSC accreditation that the existing quality scheme to EN45011 was being extended to include an eco label for bottom grown mussels - Draft 1 is complete. Presentations etc can be given to relevant buyers with a view to achieving interim buyer acceptance of such a standard.

JG will pursue information on MSC further

GG agreed that an all island project was a good idea and suggested that an all island approach needed funding from both north and south and this should continue to be chased.

(9) Loughs Agency Aquaculture Implementation Plan

This item was not discussed at the meeting as Barry Fox was unable to attend.

(10) AOB

Static gear fishermen

RH/DM stated that there was one complaint this year so far from static gear fisherman during the May fishery. It is important to avoid a conflict situation arising and need a situation where both industry and fisheries can work together.

GG suggested that the situation has worsened as money had been handed over in the past by industry members. He stated that as seed fishermen only fish for 40-50 days in the year and this should not be a problem.

Industry members further suggested that pots are not being adequately marked and that contact numbers should be painted on markers. DQ stated that the gardai should be contacted in the event of a conflict incident. He also stated that there was no

restriction in the number of pots a fisherman could have out but that there was a restriction on the size of whelks that could be landed.

Budgetary constraints

KP pointed out to Forum members that in light of the current economic downturn in the UK, significant cuts in public expenditure are expected and that this may have consequential impacts on the range of services DARD and AFBI currently provide.

Biotoxin sample/week

JG will talk to the MI regarding sample results being texted to producers from bottom mussel growing areas. MOD stated that industry needs a receipt of sample submitted.

Request for representation to the MSO regarding COC's.

DM stated that there is no longer any naval architecture expertise within BIM, or any of the other research or development agencies which could give meaningful input into this issue. He acknowledged that this was a hot topic during the consultation phase of the Rising Tide by different producers both North and South. At this time initial representations were made to the MSO which received a very frosty reception and that he did not think that the BGMCF could make a useful contribution on this highly technical issue.

GG suggested that industry might follow up on this through the PO rather than using the offices of the BGMCF.

Next Meeting

It was suggested and agreed that the next meeting would be held towards the end of September or mid-October 2010.