

MIMPACT: Developing best practice to mitigate benthic impact of demersal towed gears

Summary

In 2016, almost two thirds of all landings in the UK were caught in the Northern North Sea and West of Scotland, with vessels landing over 100k tonnes of demersal species with a value of ~£183 million. As well as providing fisheries products, benthic ecosystems play an important role in a range of other services, providing nutrients, shelter and contributing to climate regulation. Some fishing operations, such as the use of demersal towed gears, may impact the seabed and the associated benthic ecosystems. Understanding the options available to adapt fishing operations to mitigate benthic impact while minimising economic impact will be key to ensuring a long-term sustainable fishing industry.

Work involved

JNCC, in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen will:

- Conduct a review of worldwide experience on management measures using an ecosystem-based approach, developing a database with global examples of ecosystem-based management measures.
- Develop mapping products, linking commercial species distribution, habitat preference of these species and fishing effort data, to allow consideration of this information for potential mitigation options.
- Conduct an evaluation of best practices and potential mitigation options which may be appropriate in Scottish waters, with input from a consortium comprising the fishing industry, managers and regulators.
- Scope a potential Phase II with relevant partners, where best practice options could be tested in the field (Scottish waters).

Key Outcome

Scoping best practices and potential options to mitigate benthic impact of demersal towed gears in Scottish waters.

Future Work

Based on the results, future work will involve the development of a research plan with participants where practical demonstration of the findings could take place (Potential Phase 2)

Identified research priorities

- Partnerships with industry and research institutions to improve understanding of the relationship between fisheries and ecosystem functioning.
- Best practices: Incorporating mitigation options into fisheries management

Further information

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk>

Country: UK (Scotland)

Period of work: June 2018 – May 2019

Contact point: Yolanda Arjona
(Yolanda.Arjona@jncc.gov.uk)

Partners to date: University of Aberdeen

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