RECREATIONAL SEA ANGLING

A SURVEY OF THE DISTRICT

A STRATEGY FOR 2013-14

Unit 60b South Nelson Industrial Estate

Cramlington, Northumberland.

NE23 1WF.

Tel:(01670) 731 399 email: nifca@nifca.gov.uk
Introduction

During 2012 Northumberland IFCA joined forces with CEFAS to complete a survey of recreational sea angling. The project was nationwide but NIFCA was tasked with collecting data from within our district (River Tyne to Marshall Meadows). The project was simply entitled “Sea Angling 2012” and aimed to assess the socio-economic impact of recreational sea angling on our coastal communities.

More information on the project can be gathered at:


There have been many reports around Europe concerning the economic value of sea angling and some suggest that it could well be a Billion Pound sector in the UK alone.

So what was the IFCA’s role in this project? The national IFCA vision states that:

“IFCAs will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry”.

It was the IFCA’s duty to undertake the project and gather information through the sea angling 2012 survey on socio economic and catch data in the district.
The post of surveyor was outsourced to Dr Martin Kitching, a local wildlife expert and he was accompanied by one of our Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers. The Northumberland IFCA’s district was split into 5 sections of approximately 10 miles and within each section, secondary sites were designated and given a rating according to their expected activity levels according to season.

This was done by combining the knowledge of the district of our officers and by collaborating with our vice chairman Mr Les Weller, who is also a member of the Northern Federation of Sea Angling Societies.

The 12 months of from January 2012 to January 2013 saw the survey team visit countless locations up and down the coastline of North Tyneside and Northumberland and they were generally greeted with enthusiasm from the anglers they approached, with over 170 surveys being completed and an acceptance rate of around 90%.

At the end of the project it was decided that Northumberland IFCA would commence their own in-house survey, to be designed and undertaken by M J Docherty, the IFCO (and keen angler) that had formed part of the survey team in the original project.
It was suggested however, that the survey be less concerned with socio economic data and act more as an outreach to our angling community, both at sea and onshore. To do this a strategy needed to be devised and a few core questions were raised:

- Who are our angling community and how do we reach them?
- What did we learn in 2012?
- What do we need to learn in 2013?
- How can we as an IFCA better manage our inshore activity to regulate and enhance the angling sector?
So who are our angling community?

The angler can be a mysterious figure in Northumberland as during the winter months you may only see their rod tip light on the beach or a silhouette hunched over a lantern in the dead of night. This is due to the winter Cod (*Gadus morhua*) fishery being the most productive during the hours of darkness and on the back of a ferocious sea. The summer months of course bring the holiday makers and younger generation of angler to our piers for the summer Mackeral (*Scromber scombrus*) fishery and this is when our community comes under the scrutiny of the public (litter on piers and promenades continues to be a problem that anglers are often blamed for, this will addressed later in the document).
Clubs and Organisations

There are 6 large sea angling clubs known to us based in the district or that fish within it and a source suggests that there could be up to 50 smaller clubs based on in the Tyne area. This could potentially add up to a great number of club anglers. Add to this the fact that during our participation in Sea Angling 2012 a very small percentage of anglers we approached were club members and this would suggest that the total number of anglers fishing within our district is far greater than previously indicated.

Media and Social Media

As well as clubs and organisations there are also numerous media outlets aimed at the angling community. These include local radio broadcasts (Tony Taylor), nationally broadcast angling TV shows and publications in local newspapers (Alan Charlton in the Sunday Sun). In addition to these communications there are also several social media outlets aimed at angling.

www.Britishseafishing.co.uk  www.worldseafishing.com
www.gofishing.co.uk  www.nesa.co.uk

These are all examples of sites where anglers can communicate, seek and swap advice and read catch reports from other like-minded people. It is mentioned later in the document that taking account of such sites would be an incredibly powerful tool in our quest to reach our anglers.
**Charter Vessels**

There are 12 MCA coded charter vessels operating within our district at present. The average boat will sail with between 5 and 12 passengers on board and prices retail around £40 per person for a full day trip, although 4 hour evening sessions are also available in the summer months. Some vessels will work year round according to the weather although skippers will often have alternative sources of income during the winter. Assuming a full boat typically represents £480 gross income for a boat per day, then by multiplying this by the number of boats operating (12) by the number of days thought to be fished (90), a figure of over half a million pounds can be averaged for the summer months alone.

This represents a substantial income for the district and the recreational sector, especially when adding factors such as transport, food, bait and gear.

Perhaps more importantly from a management standpoint, these vessels potentially represent a significant force in the exploitation of our inshore fish stocks and we as an IFCA must strive to gather more data on the activities of charter vessels operating within the district. The fact is that anglers use charter vessels to catch fish. Most likely with a view to recouping their ticket price and with charter vessels having state of the art navigation and sounding equipment this is often a reality. With this in mind it is important that they target a sustainable fishery and are responsible with regard to minimum landing sizes. We as an IFCA must both educate and enforce to ensure that this happens both at sea and ashore.

Approaching charter vessels at sea can be tricky as they typically have rods and lines protruding from every angle of the boat. There is also the factor of sensitivity regarding these vessels. After all the skipper is at work and his passengers have paid for the privilege of sailing with him, a boarding by an enforcement body may hamper their enjoyment and negate repeat business for the skipper.

This can (and has) been negotiated by issuing skippers with signage and minimum size cards for his passengers to observe. Also, most marinas have a weigh in point where anglers can be approached after departing the vessel.
**Tackle Shops and Suppliers**

There are numerous tackle shops operating within the district where anglers can purchase tackle and bait. There are also a growing number of online warehouses where gear can be purchased by mail order, some even offering interest free credit on large orders. Clearly these two resources contribute greatly to the local economy and also to the angling sector.

However, an empty tackle shop is seldom seen as anglers congregate to seek advice and swap reports on activity in the local area. This will prove to be an integral factor in reaching our angling community.

During the Sea Angling 2012 project, flyers and minimum size cards were dispensed in volume to the tackle shops within the district and byelaw books and signage continue to be given out.
Private Boats and Marinas

There are approximately 16 marinas and slipways in the NIFCA district and these hold countless berths for the discerning angler with his/her own private boat. There are innumerable private boats that could potentially participate in angling within the district, with an estimated 1000 on the River Tyne alone. This makes up a large number of our recreational summer fishery and the IFCA is accustomed to approaching and/or boarding these boats during RIB patrols.
What Did We Learn In 2012?

By undertaking the Sea Angling 2012 project within the district we as an IFCA were afforded a unique opportunity to get close to our anglers while out of uniform and get to know what they think. Not only of the district with regards to angling but also their views on management issues and how they are perceived by the general public.

It became apparent that there is a certain degree of resentment toward the commercial fleet within the Angling community, mainly toward trawling activity and the setting of inshore gillnets.

Some of this animosity comes from well informed members of the angling community and some is born of either frustration at a poor catch rate or just as commonplace; ignorance of the commercial sector.

This is no criticism, Northumberland IFCA employs 2 ex commercial fisherman of many years’ experience and we can appreciate how complex the industry is.

This is a good example of when education becomes important in our role as an IFCA and with a wide variety of backgrounds within our team we are well equipped to deal with any queries or grievances.

SO PLEASE COME AND ASK US!!
Another thing we learned was that discerning anglers often feel that they are unfairly looked upon in the community due to the actions of a small minority.

We touched upon littering earlier in the document and it continues to be a major problem at angling hotspots. Litter such as monofilament line, bait wrappings and tackle packets are undeniably angling related, but it is a minority who perpetrate. Add to this the problem of vandalism, Blyth pier is repeatedly festooned with empty beer cans and burned out portable barbeques in the summer months. We have even been so unfortunate to witness youths lighting fire to the planking on the pier end. Idiotic it may be but true anglers would like to see this stamped out and to not be tarred with the same brush, as such activity could end in piers such as this being closed to the public.
What Do We Need to Learn in 2013?

The question really is not “what do we need to learn” but “what do we need to do?” It is apparent that we need to continue to forge relations with our angling community to many of whom an IFCA or indeed any enforcement body is an alien concept. Methods of engagement are set out later in the document but first we must ask the all-important question; -

How can we as an IFCA better manage our inshore activity to regulate and enhance the angling sector?

This question is at the very heart of our revised survey for 2013-2014 and we intend to take the answers seriously. The angling community is an integral part of our coastline and an important part of our regional economy. They also have representation in the form of the Northern Federation of Sea Angling Societies and The Angling Trust as well as representation from their chosen clubs.

Working alongside these organisations will prove vital in retaining the participation and cooperation of anglers within the district with regard to future operations.
Our Survey Methodology

By now we have a pretty clear idea of our target audience and where/when they can be reached. As such the survey will not be based on a schedule of random sampling but will be undertaken during routine shore patrols as well as having approximately 36 days annually specifically assigned to surveying in the district.

To make our continued survey a success we must strive to better our relations with the angling community and facilitate the needs that we have identified in the previous sections. As such we have developed a 3 point strategy:
Relate

Relations with the angling community are at the very core of the survey and cannot succeed without a solid foundation to build on. Therefore, the survey itself will bring us into more regular contact with anglers and act as a focal point for relations.

All anglers approached and/or surveyed will be given a size card with the contact details for the NIFCA office printed on. They will also be invited to provide a contact detail (preferably email) as it is our intention to form a database of contacts within the community so they can be sent updates of activity within the district which we feel is of interest to them.

Advertising the survey is of course important and as such a flyer may be produced and distributed to local tackle shops and angling clubs, as were the flyers for Sea Angling 2012.

Furthermore, the creation of a screen name on NESA.co.uk (North East Sea Angling) could be of use. Anglers could message the profile with any queries or concerns and these could be dealt with by an IFCO on a bi-weekly basis. There could also be a link to the NIFCA website in the profile signature.

This of course would have to be done with the assistance of the site moderators (would we be a welcome presence in the anglers’ private domain and would the profile be subject to abuse?). These are both concerns that could be addressed with the moderators should the concept evolve.

Northumberland IFCA has always been active in our coastal community, for example; attending harbour days and giving talks to school classes on day trips. The continuation of this can only bolster our profile in the community.

Further to this the IFCA have recently hosted stakeholder meetings where fishing industry representatives and members of the public were invited to address the IFCA with any queries they may have and have an informal discussion with officers. However a specifically angling orientated forum may well produce useful suggestions from the sector.
Another question in the survey relates to any initiatives that the Anglers would like to see in the district. This could be a beach clean-up organised by the IFCA in collaboration with angling bodies such as the angling trust. Such an initiative could well attract positive publicity for genuine anglers.

As an IFCA we are of course open to discussion with our stakeholders and welcome any suggestions they may have.

* Anglers on Blyth Pier on a favourable weather day.
Educate

Education is paramount to successfully managing an inshore fishery. A number of the general public may not even know what an IFCA is let alone the minimum landing size of a Brown Crab (*Cancer pagurus*). This has been proven in previous shore patrols. Therefore enhancing the profile of the IFCA is a necessary step.

Last year officers were tasked with affixing signage up and down the district, the signs were concerned with the minimum landing sizes of fish and shellfish and also the maximum amount permitted to be taken by unlicensed persons.

In addition to this, thousands of size cards were distributed and continue to be. This has seen a positive reaction from anglers. This will be complimented by the production of NIFCA branded measuring stickers that anglers can affix to their tackle boxes.

Furthermore, Northumberland IFCA has recently launched an updated website where regulations and news from within the district can be viewed at the touch of a button.

http://www.nifca.gov.uk/
Regulate

Although the core values of this strategy and the accompanying survey are of relations and education, we as an IFCA must also be seen to enforce our local byelaws and other UK/EU legislation.

There are two laws directly affecting the angling community in Northumberland. One is the prohibition of the use of Brown Crab (*Cancer pagurus*) as bait (see NIFCA byelaw 9). This is aimed at preserving crab stocks within the district and has been queried by some anglers. This is because anglers from neighbouring districts have no such regulation. Although currently under review this byelaw is still in effect and must be obeyed. Should the byelaw change a press release will be issued exclusively to a local angling correspondent.

The second is the concern of undersize marine organisms. The majority of anglers, particularly those belonging to clubs are aware of minimum landing sizes and obey them as such. In the name of conservation, angling clubs generally have their own set of minimum landing sizes larger than that of the EU for their members to adhere to. Amble’s sea angling club for example will not allow Ballan Wrasse (*Labrus bergylta*) to be weighed in in their competitions and flat fish must be presented live in water to make safe release a possibility should the angler wish to do so.

However, as with the issues of litter and vandalism there are a small minority of anglers who will take undersize fish and shellfish. Many anglers that we have discussed the issue with are in full favour of a prosecution in relation to these offences.

Later in the document is an Annex detailing the minimum landing sizes for fish and shellfish caught within the district and also a link to the byelaws of Northumberland IFCA.
Reward

During the “Sea Angling 2012” project, CEFAS offered the chance to be entered into a prize draw in exchange for receiving contact details from interviewees who had agreed to be contacted again with regard to the project. The prizes included Tackle Vouchers and Rod & Reel Combos. This evoked a mixed response from the angling community. On the one hand there were the vast majority of anglers who willingly gave their details, be it in the hope of winning a prize or just out of enthusiasm for their sport. On the other hand there were those who were opposed to the project to begin with and considered this an inducement for participation. This was of course not the case as the prize draw was not mentioned until the survey had been completed.

In the spirit of continuity we felt a prize draw would be appropriate for our in house survey. The offering of a prize should not only result in more surveys being completed but may also carry favour for the IFCA with our anglers. In light of this the vice chairman agreed with the proposal.

The winning participant will be given a credit note for the outlet of their choosing.

A budget will first be discussed with and finalised by the chief executive.
Resources/Conclusion

There are currently 7 warranted officers working within the IFCA with 2 unwarranted staff having started with the IFCA at the beginning of April 2013.

We have a 21m patrol vessel 'St Oswald' that is based in the Royal Quays Marina and is equipped with a 6m RIB 'Delta 1'.

We also have a 7m shore RIB ‘Bravo 1’ which is regularly launched from 4 locations within the district. This is towed by the IFCA’s long-wheeled based Landrover Defender.

With these resources at our disposal we expect a successful year of surveying and liaising within the angling community.
Annex

Below is a table listing the minimum landing sizes for fish and shellfish commonly caught in the district. Also shown is a link to our website where the Northumberland IFCA byelaws can be viewed in full.

http://www.nifca.gov.uk/byelaws/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Minimum Landing Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobster</td>
<td>87mm Carapace length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Crab</td>
<td>130mm Carapace width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velvet Crab</td>
<td>65mm Carapace width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cod</td>
<td>35cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddock</td>
<td>30cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiting</td>
<td>27cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaice</td>
<td>27cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock</td>
<td>30cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saithe (Coley)</td>
<td>35cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ling</td>
<td>63cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>36cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackerel</td>
<td>30cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of Terms

IFCA: Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

IFCO: Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer

CEFAS: Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

District: The area governed by Northumberland IFCA.

i.e.; From the River Tyne to Marshall Meadows and from the tidal limits of the estuaries to 6 nautical miles out to sea.

Nautical Mile: Approximately 1.16 land miles according to latitude.

MCA: Maritime Coastguard Agency.

MCA Coded: A standard that a commercial vessel must adhere to, as set by the agency.

www.dft.gov.uk/mca