

## Devon & Severn IFCA's Live Wrasse Fishery Reporting

D&S IFCA's Officers have produced an update report on the Live Wrasse Fishery in the District, available here: <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Resource-library/H-Environment-and-Research/Finfish/Wrasse/Wrasse-Fishery-Reports/The-Live-Wrasse-Fishery-2021-V1.0-January-2022>. The full report reviews the fishery and reasons for its inactivity in 2021, before considering the future of the fishery and the effectiveness of D&S IFCA's management measures relative to recent international recommendations for live wrasse fisheries. Below is a summary of the full report.

### The Live Wrasse Fishery in D&S IFCA's District

A fishery for the live capture of wrasse for use as cleaner fish in Scottish salmon farms developed in the D&S IFCA's District in 2015. Management was introduced in 2017 via the D&S IFCA Potting Permit Byelaw. The Potting Permit Byelaw permit conditions have been adapted a number of times on the basis of evidence gathered by D&S IFCA (including analyses of data from D&S IFCA's observer surveys) with a view to ensuring sustainable management of the fishery in the District.

In 2021, the Live Wrasse Fishery opened on 16<sup>th</sup> July but no fishing for live wrasse took place, initially due to mechanical problems with one of the permitted vessels. Although the second permitted vessel had no such problems, this fisher recognised that wrasse should not be held in storage areas for extended periods, and therefore decided not to fish as he would not be able to catch enough wrasse in a short timeframe to warrant booking a transport to Scottish salmon farms.

Wrasse fishers in D&S IFCA's District have supplied wrasse to the same Salmon Farm Agent since 2017. In August 2021, this Agent confirmed his intention to stop sourcing wrasse from D&S IFCA's District, with immediate effect. The Agent cited the mechanical issues highlighted above as an underlying element in this decision, but also indicated that the continued prohibition on the removal of rock cook wrasse from the fishery was a determining factor.

### The Future of the Live Wrasse Fishery in D&S IFCA's District

As there is no longer a viable market for those who would otherwise target live wrasse in D&S IFCA's District, Officers have requested that the fishers return the identification tags used to mark wrasse pots. The use of unmarked pots for the capture of live wrasse would be in contravention of the Potting Permit Byelaw Conditions. D&S IFCA's enforcement patrols will monitor potting in Plymouth Sound. The future of the Live Wrasse Fishery in D&S IFCA's District will likely be partly shaped by the ability of wrasse aquaculture facilities and other Live Wrasse Fisheries to meet demand from salmon farms. Although the Salmon Farm Agent indicated no clear intention to begin sourcing wrasse from Devon in future years, he also suggested that the production of wrasse in aquaculture facilities (an alternative to live capture of wrasse) is slow and somewhat unreliable, and that the cleaning efficacy of cultured wrasse remains untested.

### Reflections on D&S IFCA's Management to Date

This break in the District's Live Wrasse Fishery has provided an opportunity to reflect on D&S IFCA's management decisions to date in the context of advances in the literature since D&S IFCA's first literature review in 2016. Reviewing D&S IFCA's management measures ensures knowledge on the most recent research is up to date, which will be useful if the fishery begins again in future years.

The Nordic Council of Ministers recently commissioned a report which reviewed, and made recommendations for, management measures in cleanerfish fisheries (Halvorsen *et al.*, 2021). D&S IFCA's most recent report on the Live Wrasse Fishery (link above) reflects on D&S IFCA's current management measures in light of these recommendations. The recommendations were made primarily for the larger-scale established Norwegian fishery so may be more precautionary than is needed in D&S IFCA's District. Nevertheless, as D&S IFCA's full report explores in detail, most of D&S IFCA's current management measures are aligned with the recommendations. It is therefore likely that D&S IFCA's management measures are sufficient to ensure sustainability of wrasse stocks if the Live Wrasse Fishery were to begin again at the currently-permitted scale. In addition, D&S IFCA's management measures were introduced over a short timescale relative to those in Scandinavian countries, assisted by D&S IFCA's adaptive permit-based management approach.