Date: 14/03/2019
Our ref: 270236
Your ref: HPT-MCZ-005

Sarah Clark
Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Brixham Laboratory
Freshwater Quarry
Brixham
Devon
TQ5 8BA

Ruth Porter
Natural England
Ground Floor
Sterling House
Dix's Field
Exeter
EX1 1QA

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sarah,

INFORMAL
Re: Fisheries in EMS Habitats Regulations Assessment for Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ UKMO 20160010

Fishing Activity: Towed demersal vs Moderate energy infralittoral rock, High energy infralittoral rock Moderate energy circalittoral rock, High energy circalittoral rock, Subtidal coarse sediment, Subtidal sand, Fragile sponge & anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats, Pink sea-fan (*Eunicella verrucosa*), Honeycomb worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*) reefs

Natural England has reviewed the revised MCZ assessment for Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ UKMO 20160010**:** Fishing Activity: Towed demersal vs Moderate energy infralittoral rock, High energy infralittoral rock, Moderate energy circalittoral rock, High energy circalittoral rock, Subtidal coarse sediment, Subtidal sand, Fragile sponge & anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats, Pink sea-fan (*Eunicella verrucosa*), Honeycomb worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*) reefs and the associated monitoring and control plan. Natural England would like to provide the following informal comments.

MCZ assessment
Natural England would like to point out that the MCZ assessment (section 11) needs to be updated with the correct wording relating to MCZs rather than EMS HRA assessments.

In section 6 the table numbers are incorrect and the link to the justifications for the pressures is broken. In section 9 the link is broken.

Natural England agrees that more useful evidence will be obtained from the Environment Agency 2019 sediment grab survey. This will give more certainty where rock and sediment habitats are located within the Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ.

Natural England disagrees with the conclusion in the MCZ assessment that 'towed gear is unlikely to have a significant effect on the sediment features of the site' (section 11). More evidence on habitat type is required to establish which sediment communities are present to better understand their sensitivity (including predicted recovery). There is an assumption in the MCZ assessment that the benthic communities in the site are more resilient to trawl disturbance, but further evidence is still required to reach this conclusion. Once habitat data is available from the EA grab survey then an assessment can be completed in conjunction with iVMS fishing effort data to establish if there is no significant risk of the activity hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the MCZ.

Monitoring and control plan

A monitoring and control plan should identify monitoring requirements and the management actions (see note attached '*NE Staff Guidance Note: Monitoring & Control Plans and their Role in Adaptive Risk Management*'.) and should include:

- Set out (with time scales) the monitoring that will be undertaken
- Set out clearly how the data obtained will be used to make decisions on management (with time scales if possible)
- Specified management actions need to be identified, initiated by clear triggers or decision points

The proposed plan suggests that the effort data collected through iVMS will be used to establish a baseline and that D&S IFCA will monitor if this level changes (section 3.1). A trigger point will be set once effort data for each vessel has been obtained and this will form the baseline (section 4.1).
This makes the assumption that the current level of activity is not having an adverse impact on the habitat. It needs to be adequately demonstrated that the current level of activity is below a level that will not hinder the conservation objectives for the site. We need to see clearly set out how this exposure data will inform whether the exposure is at an acceptable level or not and whatever the data shows, it should be clear what management action will result.

It may be helpful to set this out in a flowchart; an example is given in Figure 1.

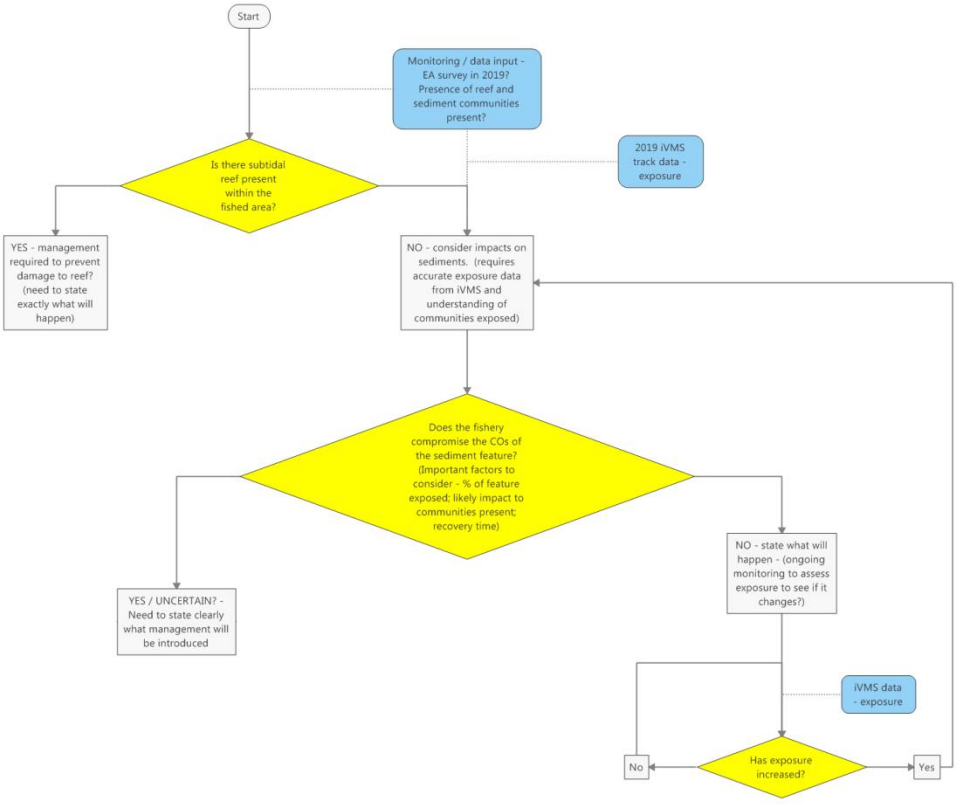

Figure 1: Example flowchart

Any new habitat characterisation data (i.e. the data collected by the EA in early 2019) should be used where possible in conjunction with the iVMS tracks to inform a judgement on whether the current fishing effort levels are acceptable or not.

If you would like to have a face to face meeting to discuss the development of the monitoring and control plan then please contact us to arrange a date.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Porter

Marine Lead Adviser
Natural England

Tel. 02080267546