

Devon and Severn IFCA News

Update on the Exe 2020 Public Mussel Stocks

Annual surveys by D&S IFCA of the public beds within the Exe have confirmed that mussel populations within these beds have not since recovered to their pre-2014 levels.

The Exe Estuary is designated as a SPA, SSSI and Ramsar site, with wading and over wintering birds forming a significant proportion of the protected species within the estuary. It is currently one of the estuaries (the other is the Teign) subject to a ban, introduced by D&S IFCA, prohibiting the removal of mussels from defined public beds.

The Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds Byelaw was used to introduce the restriction on the 1st May 2019. The closure recognises the severe decline of many of the estuary's beds following large storms in the winter of 2013-14 and subsequent but unrelated harmful algal bloom events.

The temporary closure applies to all persons. For more information on the restrictions imposed by the Byelaw in the Exe (and the Teign) please click [here](#).

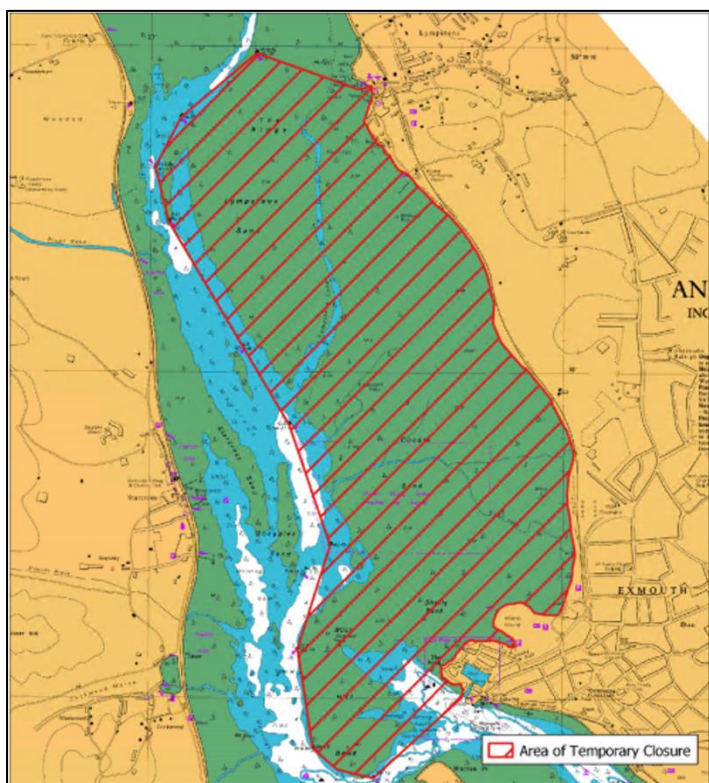


Fig1. Exe area of Temporary closure

Survey Work and the Results

Annual surveys by D&S IFCA of the public beds within the Exe have confirmed that mussel populations within these beds have not since recovered to their pre-2014 levels. The beds in their pre-2014 extent formed dense reefs which covered much of the intertidal parts of the estuary, notably on Bull Hill Bank, Starcross, and at Lymptone weighing a combined

estimate of around 2000 tonnes. This dropped sharply in 2014 to less than 100 tonnes and is currently (as of autumn 2019) estimated at less than one tonne (fig 2). Though presence of live mussel can still be observed across the public beds, these mussels are sparsely distributed and not in reefing formations. Recovery of the 2014 era beds may take a considerable amount of time, even with the temporary shellfish closure. To see the results of our latest report in more detail please click [here](#).

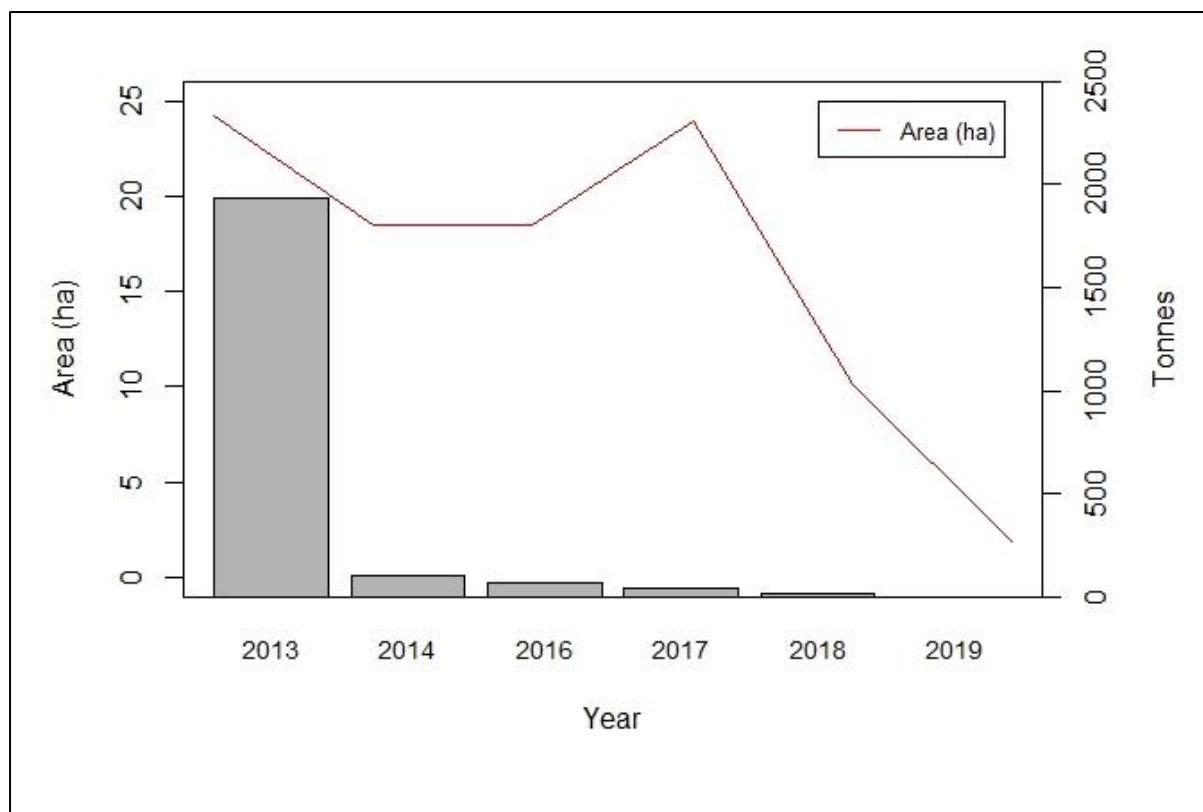


Fig 2. Survey area containing live mussel and tonnage of mussel plotted annually.

Future Management

Survey work to assess stock levels is planned for 2020. In addition, D&S IFCA is in the process of developing a new Hand Working Permit Byelaw. It is envisaged that, regardless of any temporary closure that is imposed, this Byelaw will introduce restrictions on the amount of sea fisheries resources that can be removed from different areas. Restrictions will apply to both commercial and recreational fishers. More consultation will be undertaken in 2020 to inform the development of the Byelaw.

More Information

The D&S IFCA is a good place to follow the work being conducted by D&S IFCA. We have a range of presentation pages and a large [Resource Library](#) divided into different sections relevant to all aspects of our core work.

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