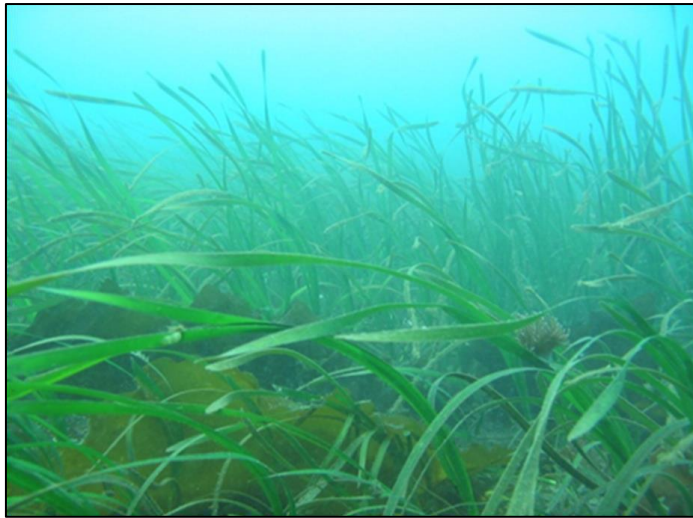


Devon and Severn IFCA News

Monitoring of Potting on Seagrass Report - Plymouth Sound

D&S IFCA has produced a report from its monitoring patrols to identify if potting occurs on seagrass within Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European Marine Site (EMS).



Seagrass beds are a protected sub-feature and one of the reasons for the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation of Plymouth Sound and Estuaries EMS. Seagrass beds provide important food for wildfowl, and nutrients to support animal communities on the seabed. Their roots catch and trap sediments, reducing coastal erosion. Submerged seagrass beds are also used as nursery areas, protecting young fish and shellfish and provide a sheltered home for many other animals, such as pipefish and seahorses.

Seagrass beds are also valued as carbon stores and their role in carbon sequestration is very important. The conservation objectives, which apply to the SAC, are to ensure that, subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features.

As a result of Defra's Revised Approach to the management of commercial fisheries within an EMS, D&S IFCA completed a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) in 2018 to determine whether management measures were required in order to ensure that fishing activity, specifically pots and creels had no adverse effects in the integrity of the site. It was concluded that the level of activity occurring at the time would result in no adverse effects from potting and the conservation objectives of the sub-feature could be reached. However, it was recommended, and agreed with Natural England, that ongoing patrols (six per year) be carried out in order to detect any changes in exposure.

The report produced as a result of the monitoring patrols can be found [here](#). The monitoring patrols from 2019 would suggest that potting on seagrass is rarely occurring, however, it is recommended that the minimum of six patrols a year are repeated in 2020 to continue to monitor fishing activity levels in proximity to seagrass within Plymouth Sound EMS.

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