

Topic 6: Maximum Soak Times for Nets (at sea)

Officers' Recommendations

That permit conditions, specifically for setting a maximum soak time of nets, are not introduced, as part of this review of the Netting Permit Conditions.

Background

Lost, discarded, and abandoned fishing gear is a concern to many and there has been an increase in reports relating to this issue. Abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear is associated with sensitive species entanglements and ghost fishing, and tackling this issue is one of the objectives in the Bass and Crab and Lobster Fisheries Management Plans.

The B&PSC recognised that the review of the Netting Permit Conditions provided an opportunity to gather more information surrounding this topic with a view to developing and introducing specific permit conditions relating to maximum soak times of nets. The intention was to establish a set period, after which lost, discarded, or abandoned nets would have to be recovered and if the owner of the nets was identifiable, it would be their responsibility to recover the nets.

Consultation Response

Officers have considered the responses in the formal consultation relating to topic 6. The principle behind this proposal was supported; however, the comments relating to the topic were limited with a view to informing discussion and decision making. Like topics 2,3,4 and 5, this proposal was overshadowed by the interest in topic 1.

Officers' View

On reflection, the proposal lacked sufficient detail, and this made it difficult for people to offer detailed views regarding the implementation of specific management measures in the permit conditions. Questions remain - What would the permit conditions look like? What is the suggested set period before recovery? How would it work in practice?

The current Netting Permit Conditions include gear marking requirements for both the Category One (commercial) and Category Two (recreational) permit holders. This includes provisions for the net markers to display either the port letters and numbers of the vessel or the permit number.

If a net is left unattended for an extended period, or is abandoned, it is likely that these forms of identification, would no longer be visible. Officers could remove the net as it would no longer be clearly marked. This does continue to place a burden on D&S IFCA, including logistical issues; however, the Authority can continue to work with others and explore funding opportunities to help with the retrieval and disposal of unmarked and unclaimed gear.

Officers will continue to monitor wider developments relating to this topic that may support future discussions and considerations by the B&PSC.

Background Papers

B&PSC papers and minutes from meetings (D&S IFCA website Resource Library)