

DSIFCA 12_25 – Retention of Undersized Spider Crab

On the afternoon of 28th April 2025, D&S IFCA officers were conducting a patrol in the East Devon area when they observed a fishing vessel returning to Beer Beach. Officers engaged the individual disembarking the vessel, who identified himself as the owner and master and confirmed he had been fishing within the D&S IFCA District using pots and nets.

Upon inspection, a basket of spider crabs (*Maja spp.*) was found on board, a total of 21 spider crabs were counted, six of which were below the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of 130mm, as defined by the D&SIFCA Netting Byelaw Permit Conditions. The undersized spider crab, measuring between 90mm and 118mm were seized and placed in evidence bags.

A contemporaneous interview was conducted under caution. The individual admitted to retaining the undersized crab and acknowledged responsibility for the catch.

Relevant Permit Conditions and Regulations

D&S IFCA Netting Permit – Condition 1.4(e):

“A permit holder or named representative is not authorised under this Permit to remove from a fishery within the District: e) a spider crab less than 130mm measured as the length of the carapace, along the midline, from the edge of the carapace between the rostrums to the posterior edge of the carapace.”

Offences to Consider

- Operating pots within the D&S IFCA District otherwise than in accordance with condition 1.4(e) of the D&S IFCA Netting Permit, in that six undersized spider crab were retained. Contrary to paragraph 2 of the D&S IFCA Netting Permit Byelaw, and Section 163 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Outcome

The Authority reviewed the case and was satisfied that the evidential test has been met. The Authority considered the public interest in this case and, in line with the Authority’s Compliance and Enforcement Strategy, an Official Written Warning was issued for the offence.