

Lyme Bay Working Group Potting Study Meeting Minutes

Meeting held at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis, on 13th November 2012

Minutes of the meeting

Present:

Martin Attrill, Plymouth University Marine Institute
Adam Rees, Plymouth University Marine Institute
Tim Glover, Chairman, Working Group
Neville Copperthwaite, Project Coordinator
John Worswick, Fisherman, West Bay, scallop diver
Dave Sales, Fisherman, West Bay, static gear
Angus Walker, Fisherman, Axemouth, static gear
Jim Newton, Fisherman, Beer, static gear
Alex Jones, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, static gear
Nigel Hill, Fisherman, Lyme Regis, static gear

Apologies

There were no apologies.

Minutes

Martin Attrill opened the meeting by introducing Adam Rees, the PhD student who will be coordinating the potting study.

Martin then explained that the study would run for a three year period in order to smooth-out any anomalies in wild stock levels and to take into account seasonal variations. He said the study was needed in order to identify how the varying levels of fishing impact on the seabed. The results of the study can then be used to establish the fishing-gear carrying capacity of the seabed necessary to support a sustainable fishery. Once these facts are established, they can then also be used as evidence for other protected areas.

Dave Sales said that he thought the study would show that potting is not damaging to seabed features and the study will in fact be a benefit to Lyme Bay.

Martin explained how the study would work.

In total, there will be sixteen areas of seabed measuring 500 meters X 500 metres. These will be divided equally between the four ports within Lyme Bay resulting in four areas under the control of each port. The four areas will comprise of one no-fished area, one low fished area, one medium fished area and one highly fished area. The same density criteria should be used for nets as well as pots.

Martin said that he needed advice from the fishermen on what are realistic potting levels within the 500m² areas. After much discussion around the table, it was agreed that 50 pots would constitute high density, 25 pots would constitute medium density and 10 pots would constitute low density. Jim pointed-out that it would not be financially viable to maintain a high level of potting throughout the three year period as it would be likely that the high density area would become depleted at times and normally, the fishermen would then move their gear to more productive ground. Martin said that this would be detrimental to the study as potting levels had to remain constant. Jim pointed-out that he only worked 50 pots and that he would have no choice but to move them if the ground became depleted. Tim Glover asked if it would help if additional pots were supplied to the fishermen in order to be used as 'emergency' pots to supplement gear levels in the highly fished areas, so that a high pot density will always be maintained in the high potting areas irrespective of catch volumes. A discussion ensued and it was agreed by all that this was a workable compromise. Martin asked the group to estimate how many pots would be needed and the amount settled on was 30 pots per port. (120 pots in total) These pots will form a pool to be allocated as the fishermen in each port see fit, provided they are used solely for the study.

In addition, the same pots will need to be used as experimental collectors, once every three months. This will involve laying the pots in each of the four areas adjacent to each of the four ports, on consecutive days (weather permitting) and recording everything that is caught and then releasing all the catch back to the sea. Plymouth University students will be in attendance to record the catch.

The pots must be made-up and deployed in 6 strings of 5 pots for each port, to ensure constancy within the study. The pots will be Parlour Pots with 8" mouths and without escape hatches or biodegradable panels. Pot beams should be 10 fathom and buoy lines should be 25 fathom.

Neville was tasked with getting quotes for and sourcing the 120 pots, beams and buoy-lines and buoys and report back to Tim before an order is placed.

Martin said the gear should be made available during January 2013 when he would like to see the study commence. He noted that John Worswick had produced potting project area coordinates for the port of West Bay and he informed the group that it was crucial that the other three ports produce theirs as soon as possible.

Tim asked if the outstanding coordinates could be pinned-down before the next meeting of the WG on the 27th November. The fishermen agreed that they could and Neville arranged to telephone Angus Walker, Jim, John and Alex Jones a week prior to the meeting in order to receive the coordinates and plot them on an Admiralty chart. There was discussion about whether or not to buoy all the areas and it was decided that this would be unnecessary, the buoys would obstruct fishing and they would probably all move in the first bad weather. The 4 no-potting areas would however be buoyed with highly visible buoys.

Jim pointed out that the Beer end of Lyme Bay was also fished by boats from Exmouth and Brixham who's owners were not members of the WG and so therefor he could not guarantee that the sanctity of the four study areas at Beer would be respected, particularly, the no-potting area. It was decided that once the coordinates were submitted, Tim and Neville would contact these fishermen and inform them of the locations of the study areas and explain the project to them.

Tim asked if associated costs and rewards should be considered but Nigel Hill said that as the study would benefit fishermen in the long term, giving them the pots is enough. All present agreed with this.

Tim said that fishermen in each port should take ownership and run the project in their own way with regard to ensuring the correct potting densities are maintained and any necessary data collected, as long as the criteria set by Martin and Adam are met.

Duration of meeting: 5pm – 7:30pm

1) Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 27th Nvember 2012, 6pm at the Royal Lion Hotel, Lyme Regis.

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