

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

PLANNING WORKSHOP ON MAPPING KEY FISHING AREAS IN THE NORTH SEA

7th - 8th February 2006, London

The Purpose of the workshop was to assess the feasibility and describe the scope of work necessary for undertaking collection of fishers' knowledge and supporting data required to map priority fishing areas in the North Sea.

Participants (22) from 7 Member States included National Facilitators representing the knowledge of the fishermen (or access to it), and scientists working with spatial data sets on fishing activity.

Day 1

After opening discussions on what the final outputs might be and who would use them, the group reviewed the balance between benefits and threats of mapping fishing areas. Possible ways to overcome the three most common perceived threats (revealing sensitive information, misuse of data, the threat of information being used to close areas) were examined.

Using the '*Management of areas in response to the Habitats Directive*' as a case-example of management issues that the NSRAC will have to provide advice on, lists were made of the information needs, issues, and organisations needing to be involved. The output lists were quite generalised and stimulated further discussions on the range of types of spatial management issues that the NSRAC may have to advise on. Participants found it difficult to elaborate on the information needs when the management problems were so broad and contrasting.

Changing approach, the group considered what spatial data on fishing activity might be readily available and useful to meet the needs of the RAC. Gerjan Piet presented examples of maps of ICES catch and effort spatial data and satellite vessel monitoring data (VMS). Participants were asked if these types of data combined for all the Member States, would be useful to the RAC.

The group considered that such information would be valuable to the RAC, and indicated that placing the emphasis of the proposed work on mapping currently available scientific data sources, rather than fishermen's knowledge of fishing grounds, could overcome many of the threats identified previously. At this point in time, the group were most comfortable with fishermen's knowledge being used to validate and cross-check the scientific technical data. The group **agreed that this would be a useful starting point** from which to build industry-science working relationships and the specific data and knowledge required to meet the future needs of the RAC in relation to spatial planning. For example, many participants voiced interest in mapping not just fishing activity, but 'areas of interest to the fishing industry', such as nursery areas.

With this focus in mind, the group considered again the specific information needs, issues and barriers related to mapping of ICES catch and effort and VMS data combined for the Member States.

Day 2

Opening activities were proposed to build on the outcomes of day 1 by considering ways to overcome barriers and suggesting specific approaches that would lead to successfully combining the ICES catch and effort data and VMS data for the Member States.

Having had time to reflect on the discussions of day 1, the group considered instead that it was important to engage in further discussions on the wider purpose and outcomes of any potential project. The discussion resulted in **agreement on the outline of a project:**

Purpose: Provide the information to help the NSRAC to make informed decisions about priority fishing areas in the context of responding to marine spatial planning issues.

Aim: Map fishing activity

Objectives:

1. Identify data sources and harmonise to define data standards
2. Merging data (technical process)
3. Mapping
4. Quality assurance of maps/ validation/ cross-checking with source
5. Participation – cross checking with industry during all stages (horizontal objective)
6. Systems development
7. Management
8. Communication

The group made two recommendations that should form ‘pre-conditions’ or objectives for the NSRAC if such a project were to be undertaken. These pre-conditions were considered by the group to be essential to ensuring success:

1. The RAC to work to ensure agreements and assistance of Member States
2. The RAC to realise the need for transparency and communication of any outputs.

Finally, the group formulated a rough project plan, describing the tasks and their sequencing. The role of National Facilitators, overall timeframe and possible funding sources were also considered.

Where next? The outcomes of the workshop will form a feasibility and scoping report, due to Defra on 31st March 2006. If the North Sea RAC, Defra and project partners from Member States decide to move forward on this initiative, funding sources will be sought and a full project proposal developed.

Participant list:

Wim Demaré, Hugo Andersson, Gerjan Piet, Michael Andersen, Odd Smedstad, Dave Reid, David Donnan, Anders Bogelius, Fenneke Brocken, Sophie desClers, Barrie Deas, Peter Breckling, Luc Corbisier, Mike Park, Luc Mellaerts, Fred Normandale, Nigel Proctor, Xavier Harley, Euan Dunn, Stuart Rogers, Paul Eastwood.



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