

FACTSHEET: Bass Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)

Why a Bass FMP?

Bass is of substantial social, cultural and economic importance to local coastal communities.

The Bass FMP seeks to ensure stocks in English and Welsh waters are maintained at sustainable levels, and the full benefits of bass fishing can be realised by the communities that depend on them.

What does the Bass FMP do?

The Bass FMP collates the evidence on bass stocks and the bass fishery around England and Wales. It identifies existing management measures and sets out short and medium-long term policies and actions needed to manage the bass fishery.

Summary -----

Current Management

Joint UK/EU management measures were implemented in 2015. These include a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS), domestic authorisations system, seasonal closures and catch/bycatch limits for commercial and recreational fishers.

Three gear types are authorised for landing bass. Regional byelaws provide inshore (<6 nautical mile) management, and a network of nursery areas also provide protection for juvenile bass.

Bass is currently fished within sustainable limits aligned with ICES advice.

Goals of the FMP

The overarching aim of the FMP is to ensure stocks are harvested sustainably whilst benefiting a diverse range of environmental, commercial, recreational, and social interests. There are nine detailed goals:

- 1) Inclusive stakeholder engagement structures to inform management of the bass fishery.
- 2) Equitable access to the bass fishery, while prioritising stock sustainability.
- 3) Minimise discarding of bass bycatch where survival rates are low.
- 4) Encourage and facilitate full compliance with bass regulations.
- 5) Maximise the benefits of bass fishing for local coastal communities.
- 6) Sustainable harvesting of the bass stock in line with scientific advice.
- 7) Protecting juvenile and spawning bass.
- 8) Minimise the impact of bass fishing on the wider marine ecosystem.
- 9) Mitigate against and adapt to the impact of climate change on bass fishing.

Proposed Actions in the FMP

Key elements of the plan include:

- a) **Improving the evidence base:** Gaps identified include data on commercial discarding, recreational removals, and the social, cultural and economic benefits of bass fishing to local coastal communities.
- b) **Initial management measures:** The FMP identifies actions to build on the existing bass management framework via:
 - The establishment by government of bass management group(s) with balanced stakeholder representation.
 - A review of existing management measures to determine whether alternative approaches better align with FMP goals (priority measures for early consideration include the current bass authorisation system and the timing/duration of the closed seasons).
 - The development of adaptive management systems (e.g. making more use of licence conditions rather than legislation).
- c) **Longer term measures:** Additional measures proposed for review as evidence and monitoring improve include appropriate size limits, the regulation of shallow inshore and shore-based netting, and alignment of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and Marine Management Organisation powers to ensure consistency in enforcement.

Environmental Impacts

The bass fishery has an impact on the marine environment primarily through bycatch of marine mammals, seabirds, and fish, as well as climate change related issues and cultural heritage.

What does this consultation mean for me?

This is an opportunity for you to have your say in the future of bass management in English and Welsh waters. We want to receive your input and views throughout the consultation and beyond.

Give us your views

Find the consultation online at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/fisheries-management-plans-1/seabass-fmp-consultation/>

or scan the QR code to visit the page.

The consultation is open to 23:59 on 1 October 2023.



What happens next?

Your feedback will be analysed and considered as part of the consultation process. Following this the Bass FMP will be updated as appropriate. The aim is to have the final Bass FMP published by the end of 2023.