

From: [REDACTED]

vendredi 9 août 2019 18:10

SWW Group's joint recommendation for a demersal discard plan

Joint Recommendation of the South Western Waters_2020-2021 Rev 09-08.docx

Dear all

Following the email bellow please find attached a new revised Joint Recommendation, in which the date for all submissions of new information concerning the exemptions is foreseen for 1 May instead of 31 May.

Thanks for all cooperation,
Best regards

SWW Group's joint recommendation for a demersal discard plan

Dear all

The consensus for a revised SWW Joint Recommendation was only reached if a survivability exemption for cuckoo ray, caught with bottom trawls in ICES Subarea 8, is maintained for one year.

Therefore, please find attached a revised Joint Recommendation and we would ask the Commission to accept it in order to proceed with the adoption of the amendments to the current discard plan, namely to adopt similar conditions for all basins to ensure a level playing field for fishermen.

This understanding of SWW MS is based on the following arguments:

Main Findings of EWG 19-08 (partial quotation):

"...The studies showed most cuckoo rays were alive at the point of release (90-97%), and 41% (n=868) and 84% (n=37) were in excellent condition. Both studies were from the otter trawl fisheries in NWW region. Information to assess the relevance to North Sea fisheries was not provided. Vitality data do not constitute discard survival estimates but indicate survival potential."

COM has already accepted the continuation of this exemption, asked by the NS MS Group, for 2020 as follows:

The Scheveningen Group recommends an extension of the current one-year high survivability exemption from the landing obligation of cuckoo ray in ICES area 4. The request is based on Article 15.4(b) of the Basic Regulation and the North Sea MAP.

For the NWW JR:

Main Findings of EWG 19-08 (partial quotation):

"...A new study from an otter trawl fishery in Villa showed most cuckoo rays were alive at the point of release (97%) and 84% (n=37) were in excellent condition. Vitality data do not constitute discard survival estimates but indicate survival potential."

COM has already accepted the continuation of this exemption, asked by the NWW MSGroup, for 2020 as follows:

- Cuckoo ray (*Leucoraja naevus*) caught with any gear in the North Western Waters.

Further details in Annex B providing additional scientific information about the survivability of Cuckoo ray. The group will send a state of play of the research to STECF by 1 May each year.

For the SWW JR:

Main Findings of EWG 19-08 (exhaustive quotation):

"Exemption was granted for one year (2019) for cuckoo ray in ICES subareas 8 and 9. This is a request for an extension.

New vitality evidence was provided for cuckoo ray caught by trammel net and trawl fleet. The sampling covered all year and main fishing areas around Portugal.

58% of specimens were assessed to be in Excellent condition, 21% in Good condition and 21% in Poor/Dead condition.

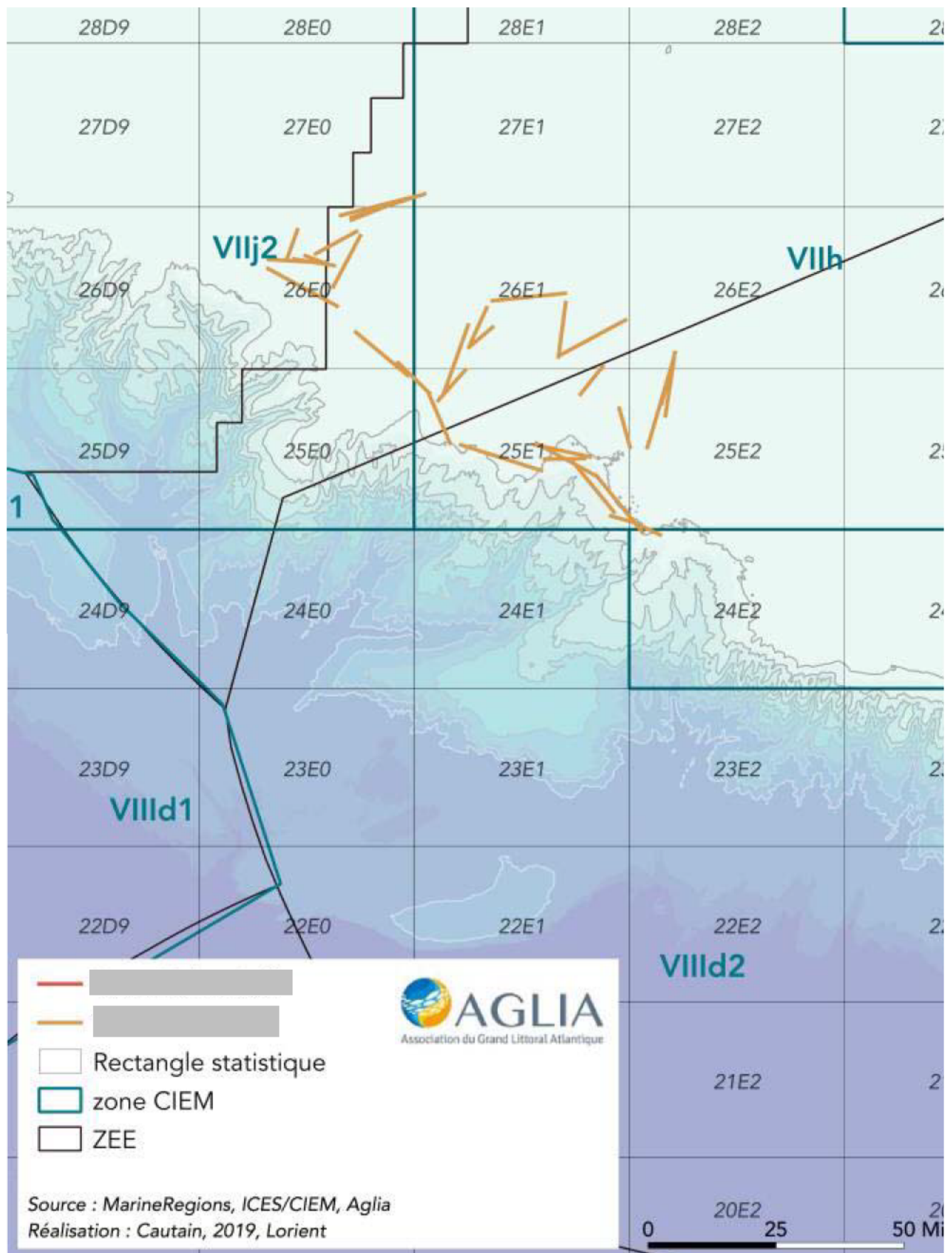
Vitality evidence was also presented from two scientific trawl surveys. For the 5 specimens observed, most were found dead (n=4; 20% survival), however, these data are not representative of commercial fishing conditions due to the short tow duration of 30 mins, which is likely to have resulted in more rays in better health condition.

New directly observed discard survival estimated of cuckoo ray were also provided. A total of 503 cuckoo rays caught with otter bottom trawl in ICES 9a were assessed for vitality, and 141 held for survival monitoring. 66.8% of cuckoo rays were alive at the point of release, 7.6% in excellent condition, 24% in good condition, 35% in poor condition and 33% were dead. All cuckoo rays died within 8 days of monitoring (survival was 0%) regardless of initial vitality. No controls were used to determine experimental induced mortality. This study indicates that the survival rate of discarded cuckoo ray could be zero in some fisheries.

Information was provided on the Portuguese and Spanish fleets. Further details are needed on all fishery-gear-area combinations to which the exemption applies.

Further data and knowledge of discard survival and discard rates for different ray and skate species, including cuckoo ray, are anticipated in outputs from a road map. Initiatives are planned to encourage fishermen to good use best practices in handling and release of discarded rays."

As you can see below, fishing operations were realized in division 8a (by the vessel [REDACTED] having caught a total of 316 cuckoo rays); moreover, divisions 7h (NWW) and 8a (SWW) are neighboring and, as illustrated, a fishing operation may start in 7h and end in 8a (rectangles 25E2 and 24E2):



Impossible to explain to fishermen why:

- they would be allowed to discard cuckoo rays in 7h and not in 8a in 2020;
- the study pre-SURF has not be taking into account, maybe due to the absence of an English version (which is not an acceptable reason, a summary in English was also provided).

To facilitate the absence of objection to a delegated regulation including this exemption, scientists from AGLIA and Ifremer may explain directly to European MPs, who would be interested in, why this vitality study opens the door to the demonstration of the survivability of this species through the SURF study (which will be cancelled if the exemption is not maintained in 2020, the worst scenario).

A dedicated meeting might also be organized in the very next weeks between the scientists involved in the SURF study and STECF representatives.

Best regards,