

Compiled by the Common
Wadden Sea Secretariat,
Wilhelmshaven, FRG

Mussel Fishery in Schleswig Holstein

In 1997, an agreement was found between the Ministry for the Environment, Nature and Forestry, the Ministry for Rural Regions and the Mussel Fishery Association regarding mussel fishery in the National Park of Schleswig-Holstein. In the form of a legally binding contract, signed on 06.03.1997, a number of key points were fixed (T. Borchardt, WSNL 1997-1).

In January 1999, an agreement was signed between the fishermen and the mussel fishery to adapt the 1997 contract to the amendment of the National Park Law which is expected to pass parliament at the end of 1999. The fishermen agree to the extension of the National Park border and zone 1, and the introduction of a zero-use area in the National Park. After the amended National Park Law will have been enacted the contract of 1997 will be prolonged until 2016 (source: Ministry for the Environment, Nature and Forestry, Kiel).

The key points of the contract of 1997 are as follows:

- Prohibition of landing wild mussels. Permit for landings only for cultivated consumable mussels (shell length, as a rule, more than 4 cm).
- Permit for fishing seed or half-grown mussels only for the purpose of stocking the culture lots in the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea. Prohibition of exporting seed or half grown mussels.

- Complete closure of the intertidal zone for all kinds of mussel fishery without exception.
- Closure of zone 1 of the National Park at 100 % of the area for mussel culture lots and at 93 % for fishing seed and half-grown mussels.
- Gradual reduction of the culture lot area to 2,000 ha (2,400/2,200/2,000 ha until the end of 1999/2002/2006, respectively).
- Closed seasons for mussel landings from 15th April to 14th July and for fishing seed and half-grown mussels from 1st May to 30th June.
- Minimum residence period of ten (-22) months: mussels which are put onto the culture lots from 1st December of any given year to the 30th November of the next year may only be harvested from the 1st October in the following year.
- Prohibition of intentionally repelling sea ducks and other sea birds from the culture lots.
- A maximum of eight mussel fishery licenses,
- An annual fee of 460,000 DM for governmental administration, management and monitoring.
- Realization of management and monitoring by the Fishery Office and the National Park Office.
- Permanent control by a satellite-supported black-box system; additional documentation of all fishing and cultivating activities of fishing and landing quantities, etc.
- A public information campaign at the beginning of each mussel season about the situation of stocks and fishery.

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Lower Saxony Blue Mussel Management Plan

Introduction

In 1997, the Lower Saxony parliament requested the government to elaborate a Management Plan for mussel seed fisheries. The reason for this request was the alarming situation with regard to the status of eulittoral mussel beds in the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea. It was agreed to base the Management Plan on the results of running scientific investigations into the distribution and abundance of eulittoral mussel beds.

The Plan was signed by the Ministers responsible for fisheries and nature conservation on 30 November 1998 and is valid for the period 1998-2003.

The Plan states that the licensing and harvesting of seed mussel will be arranged in such a way that certain traditional mussel sites with a high potential for development will, for an initial five-year period, be excluded from seed mussel fishery so as to enable an undisturbed development of the habitat mussel bed.

Classification of beds

On the basis of the evaluation of surveys into distribution and occurrence of eulittoral beds over the period 1966-1997 (eight surveys), it was concluded that the aerial coverage had declined from some 50 km² in 1975 to about 15 km² in 1996 and 1997.

In the study, a total of 187 locations of beds had been identified over the period 1966-1997.

Many banks were present in most of the surveys throughout the past 30 years and had not, or only slightly, changed positions indicating that specific sites have a high potential for the development of mature mussel beds.

The 187 locations have been classified on the basis of the number of times beds have been observed in the eight surveys.

Three categories are distinguished in the Management Plan, namely

Category I: Beds which were present in all eight surveys;

Category II: Beds which were observed in seven out of eight surveys;

Category III: All other beds. Former culture lots have also been put in Category III.

In Table 1, it is indicated how many locations there are in each of the three categories.

In the third column, it is indicated how many locations are excluded from fisheries because they fall within the non-fishery zones according to the National Park Order (§8(2)).

Management Goals

The goal of the Plan is an effective, conflict-solving merger of economic needs and ecological aims. To this end, both sustainable mussel fisheries and the undisturbed development of eulittoral mussel beds must be safeguarded. Furthermo-

re, in particular, it is stated that, considering the special conditions in the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea, seed mussel fisheries in the eulittoral is indispensable. At the same time, undisturbed development of mussel stocks is of special importance considering the decrease since the beginning of the 1990s.

Measures

With the aim of implementing the goals from the Plan, a number of eulittoral beds are excluded from seed mussel fisheries, in addition to those which were already excluded because they are situated within the non-fishery areas (Table 1). It concerns an additional 17 beds which have been listed in Table 1, according to their classification.

The beds which have not been excluded are, in principle, open to seed mussel fishery. The allocation of areas is done by the State Fisheries Office in Bremerhaven on the basis of, amongst others, economic needs, location, suitability and accessibility for fisheries and stock size. To this end, the Fisheries Office carries out inventories on locations, amounts, densities and percentage of juvenile mussels. The National Park Administration is consulted in the licensing procedure.

The National Park Administration is responsible for the estimation and surveillance of total stocks and the supervision of the evaluation of the Management Plan.

For the latter, it is important to monitor the developments of the beds, which have been excluded from fisheries, and to carry out research in these areas.

Source

Staatskanzlei Niedersachsen, 1998. Miesmuschelmanagementplan.

Category	No. of documented beds	No. excluded from fishery	No. in non-fishery areas according to Nat.Park Order	Total No. of beds excluded from fishery
I	20	4	3	7
II	17	8	0	8
III	150	5	28	33
Total	187	17	31	48

Table 1
Documented eulittoral mussel beds and number excluded from fisheries for different categories.