Gear and Developments to Minimise Bycatch and Discard

Rationale

* Short term aim of the bass FMP to review gear and developments to minimise bycatch and discard of bass. The review must be underway within 2 years of publication for this target to be met.
* The review will include current gear modifications as well as new developments.
* The purpose of this task-and-finish group is to consider potential gear developments to reduce bass bycatch and discards from nets and trawls, including e.g. mesh sizes aligned with the MCRS; and to consider potential gear modifications and engagement with relevant schemes to help reduce the bycatch of sensitive species associated with bass fishing.

Objective

* Short term objectives:
  + Goal 3 “Minimise discarding of bass bycatch where survival rates are low”.
  + Goal 8.1 “Minimise and, where possible, eliminate bycatch of sensitive species in bass fisheries”.

Considerations

* What modifications can be made to gear to reduce bycatch?
* What are the financial implications for fishermen making these modifications?
* Are there any industry or scientific experts that the group should hear from?
* What does current research in this area suggest?
* What would be the impact on industry for changing standards of gear?

The role of the BMG

The bass management group will be responsible for deciding the composition and size of the task-and-finish working group, ensuring all viewpoints are represented.

Defra suggests that the following groups are represented within the task-and-finish group:

* Defra
* Marine Management Organisation
* Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
* Commercial Fishers
* Environment Agency
* Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
* Wider supply chain
* Natural England/Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Do you have any further suggestions for the membership of the group?

Next Steps

The task-and-finish group should meet as and when required to review evidence on gear modifications to reduce bycatch within bass fisheries and discuss any new changes or technologies. These meetings will be organised and chaired by a selected individual, either from within the bass management group or externally. These meetings should also focus on how the bass management group and the task-and-finish group can address the medium-and long-term bass FMP goals.