

PE2110/C: Protect wild wrasse stocks

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands written submission, 24 October 2024

I am writing to provide you with an update to the wrasse fishery with regards to Parliamentary Petition PE2110.

In addition to the measures outlined in the Scottish Government written submission of 22 July, I would like to inform you we are now in receipt of a report titled “Assessing the implications of wrasse fishing for marine sites and features”, which brings new evidence of potential wrasse fishing interactions with Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)’s and Marine Protected Area (MPA)’s. In light of this evidence, we now intend to undertake an appropriate assessment, under the Habitats Regulations, for the wrasse fishery ahead of the next season opening in May 2025.

As you’re aware, no appropriate assessments have been carried out previously as wrasse are not specifically included as protected features in any of Scotland’s Special Areas of Conservation and there was no evidence that showed wrasse fishing have a significant impact on rocky reefs.

In addition to the wrasse specific fisheries assessment noted above, as part of implementing fisheries management measures for the inshore region, fisheries assessments are being undertaken for all the Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas (NCMPAs) where these measures are required in line with Management Advice (CMA) provided by NatureScot. Whilst wrasse is not a protected feature of any designated sites, these assessments will highlight if fisheries management measures are appropriate and that the measures put in place ensure that fishing activities do not negatively impact the conservation objectives and protected features of designated sites.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON