

Fisheries in brief

1: Ecosystem-based fisheries management

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Overfishing and bottom-contact fishing practices have had significant impacts on marine ecosystems and contributed towards the decline of marine biodiversity. The loss of biodiversity compromises the resilience of marine ecosystems to disease and environmental change, and reduces its capacity to provide essential goods and services relied upon by society.

Ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) focuses on achieving sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems simultaneously. It recognises that fishing activity effects broader ecosystem health, beyond the target fish stock, and that fishing must be considered alongside other marine activities in management decisions.

Ensuring effective adoption of EBFM will depend upon our ability to understand and account for the interconnectedness of ecosystems with the activities of people who rely upon them for food, livelihoods and wellbeing.

The recent *UK Fisheries Act (2020)* established a number of objectives which all UK Fisheries Administrations are committed to supporting and delivering, including the ecosystem objective to minimise and reverse negative impacts of fisheries on marine ecosystems.

Scotland's Future Fisheries Management Strategy 2020-2030 also recognises the importance of EBFM to restore healthy and diverse marine habitats and achieve ambitious climate commitments.

What the Scottish Wildlife Trust would like to see:

- Scotland taking a leading role in adopting EBFM that truly places the environment at the core of decision-making.
- A legal commitment to end overfishing and ensure all fishing activity occurs within environmental limits.
- Prioritisation of environmental recovery through incentivising and promoting sustainable fishing activity (eg licence and quota allocation).
- Management measures that promote stock recovery, as well as protection and enhancement of marine features that the stock depends on.
- Incorporation of the European Union's four environmental principles throughout decision making (the precautionary principle, polluter pays principle, rectification at source, and prevention principle).
- Increased support for the development and uses of innovative catching practices that reduce environmental impacts, including existing work from groups such as Fisheries Innovation Scotland and The Gear Innovation and Technology Advisory Group.

To read our full Fisheries Management Policy, visit: scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/living-seas

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