

FEAS Observations on MUL250004- Sligo, Seaweed Harvesting, Celtic Seaweed Bath Products Ltd.

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Summary

- **Fisheries Ecosystems Advisory Services (FEAS) Marine Institute, were asked by DAFM for observations on MUL250004, an application for a MUL, submitted by Celtic Seaweed Bath Products Ltd** for the purpose of hand harvesting seaweed (*Fucus Sarratus*) from intertidal zones of five areas of county Sligo, of 1,826 wet tonnes per year.
- The following response is with consideration of potential impacts on sea fisheries and the seafood sector, including aquaculture.
- There is no indication of the of licence (in years) that is sought.
- Harvesting operations are not likely to impact fishing activities, fish biology or aquaculture activities.
- There is lack of clarity between the proposed licence areas in the application (five sites noted) and the sites detailed in the supporting documentation - the SISAA and Seaweed Biodiversity Survey (eight sites noted).
- Licensed Aquaculture activities, SACs, SPAs & Water Directive areas in or in close proximity¹, based on provided (or assumed) Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM) coordinates:
 1. Raghley (55800, 842000) – SAC, SPA, Shelfish Water Directive area
 2. Easkey (534413, 838537) – NA
 3. Easkey (533000, 83900) – NA *ITM coordinates are incorrect* (533000, 839000)
 4. Easkey (53900, 83900) – NA *ITM coordinates are incorrect* (5390000, 839000)
 5. Lislowery (560654, 847936) – SAC
- Where SACs and SPAs are present it should be verified that the particular activity complies with regulations that will safeguard the ecological integrity of the proposed site in view of the site's conservation objectives under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and also have regard to the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. The activity must also be deemed to be in the public interest.
- Fishing activities are recorded in close proximity, however owing to the littoral nature of *F. Sarratus* these are unlikely to effected².
- Likewise, spawning and nursery grounds of commercial important fish species, close to the proposed harvest areas, are not likely to effected².
- Estimats of abundance, undertaken in 2021, are for sites along the north Easky shore and do not cover sites 1 or 5 itemised in the application
- The abundance estimates are made for two seaweed species, *Fucus serratus* and *Laminaria digitata* and the application for *Fucus serratus* alone.
- The Biomass Survey estimated abundance (kg/m²) based on two transects for eight flagged harvest areas.
- Productivity is not estimated.
- **It is likely that the proposed harvest rates are sustainable based on historic harvesting, however without any in-situ area specific estimates of *Fucus Sarratus* productivity this cannot be definitively stated. This is of concern. As a littoral species, potential impact on biodiversity in the littoral zone of harvesting cannot be estimated.**

¹ <https://dafm-maps.marine.ie/aquaculture-viewer/>

² 2014 – 2018; Ireland's Marine Atlas: <https://atlas.marine.ie>