

FEAS Observations on MUL250018- Cill Ciaran Bay, Connemara, Seaweed Harvesting.

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Summary

- **Fisheries Ecosystems Advisory Services (FEAS) Marine Institute, were asked by DAFM for observations on MUL250018, an application for a MUL, submitted by** for the purpose of hand harvesting seaweed (*Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Fucus vesiculosus* where accessible) from intertidal shorelines in Rosmuc and associated island within Cill Ciaran Bay, Connemara, approximating 19.5km in length.
- The following response is with consideration of potential impacts on sea fisheries and the seafood sector, including aquaculture.
- A licence is sought for 15 years.
- There is no statement of proposed harvest rate, either over licence period or per year. The SAA report references “the present harvest of 10,000 wet tonnes”, however no definitive request rate is stated in the application.
- Harvesting operations are not likely to impact fishing activities, fish biology or aquaculture activities.
- Licensed Aquaculture site, SAC, SPA, Shellfish Water Directive Areas¹.
- 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 *A. nodosum* and *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.
- Estimates of *A. nodosum* abundance are based on outdated evidence, with no evidence of contemporary biomass or production estimates. The supporting SAA report states:
"Information presented by Professor Michael D. Guiry estimate that over the course of four years, Cill Chiarain bay can sustainably collect at least 40,000 wettonnes of Ascophyllum, allowing for a 25% increase over the present harvest of 10,000 wet tonnes. However this is possibly a modest estimate"
No supporting evidence or information for this is referenced or presented.
- 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 *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Fucus vesiculosus* or 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>