



Pelagic RAC
European Commission
Directorate-General Fisheries
c/o Mr Fokion Fotiadis
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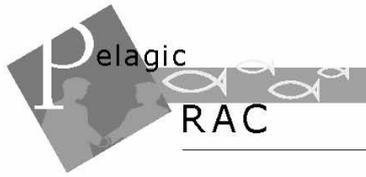
Date: 6 November 2007
Our reference: PRAC07.39/AC
Subject: PELAGIC RAC RECOMMENDATIONS SACs

Dear Mr Fotiadis

Thank you for your letter of 14 September 2007 in response to the letter sent to you by the Pelagic RAC in connection with this subject. I have to express the disappointment of the RAC at your response.

The Pelagic RAC is strongly of the opinion that this matter raises a number of issues which require to be resolved if our objective of long term management plans for the major pelagic stocks is to be achieved. There is no doubt that the future will see an increasing number of closed areas introduced either to protect the marine habitat or indeed certain stocks. Your officials have recently published proposals to close a significant area west of the British Isles to protect the blue ling stock and that would impinge upon pelagic activity unless a pragmatic solution can be found.

One encouraging aspect of your letter is that you recognise that "pelagic fishing above the bottom will not damage deep water habitats." In that we are in complete agreement as the very last thing a pelagic vessel wants to go is put its gear onto the bottom especially if it is hard bottom and in particular coral. The issue is, therefore, one of control. You state in your letter "it would be very difficult, according to our control experts, to ensure an efficient control compliance of the protection measures in such small areas unless all fishing vessels are excluded from such areas." The logical extension of such a policy would be to create vast no go areas for pelagic vessels. We have to take issue with your control experts on this issue. The EU pelagic fleet is relatively small and can be easily identified. There can be no doubt in the majority of cases as to what constitutes a pelagic vessel. Given the size of the vessels that constitute the pelagic fleet, they are all fitted with VMS equipment so there is absolutely no problem in tracking such vessels or knowing their whereabouts at any given time.



There may be some who will acknowledge that a particular vessel is a pelagic vessel but how are we to be sure it is not towing a bottom trawl? In the Pelagic RAC we believe that compliance is an essential pre requisite to securing sustainable stocks. But we also need recognition by the Commission that we are playing by the rules and that automatic exclusion from an area closed for non pelagic reasons should not be the response. I raised this matter at the recent meeting of the Advisory Board of the CFCA as it does seem to me to fall within their remit. I would suggest that in conjunction with the CFCA the Pelagic RAC identify the permanent EU pelagic fleet and that a code of conduct be drawn up in respect of pelagic activity within closed areas that would not result in their automatic exclusion from such areas. We would require your co operation to embark on this route and we would welcome your comments as to how we might satisfy your control experts that the presence of a pelagic vessel in a particular area does not imply potential damage to the marine habitat.

Yours sincerely,

c/o

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Mr Iain MacSween
Chairman of the Pelagic RAC

c.c. Mr Kenneth Patterson, Mr Emmanouil Papaioannou, Mr Poul Degnbol, Ms Maria Jesus Ruiz-Monroy.