



Pulse Fishing Voluntary Agreement for 2019

Background

In December 2017, the NFFO and VisNed / Ned. Vissersbond brokered an *industry to industry* agreement through which pulse fishing would not take place in a number of identified areas during 2018. Particularly sensitive areas on inshore grounds were selected by English inshore fishermen, familiar with the fisheries concerned.

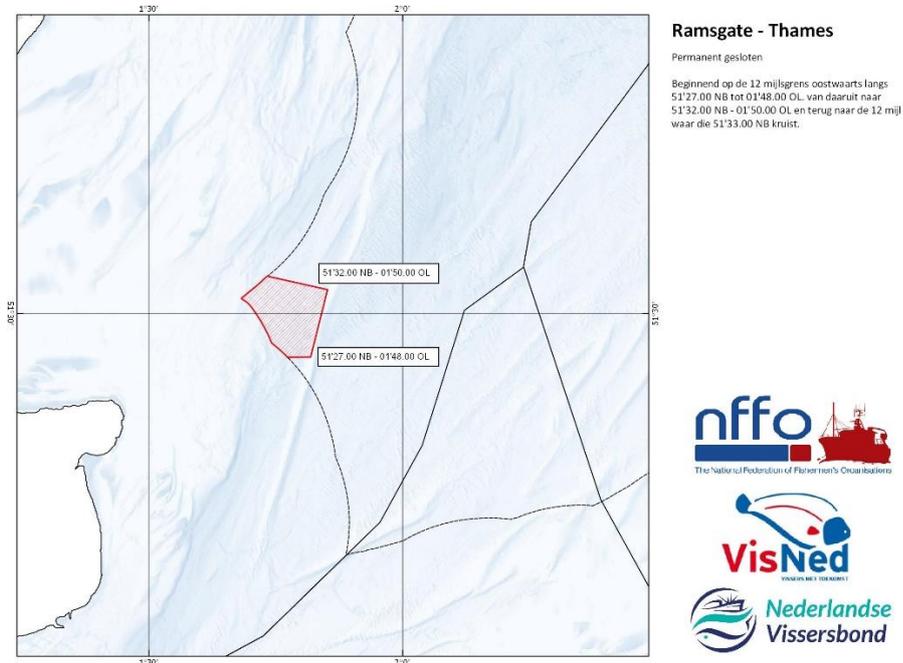
A meeting was held in London on 23rd January 2019, to review the 2018 arrangements and to discuss refinements to the agreement for 2019.

2018 Agreement

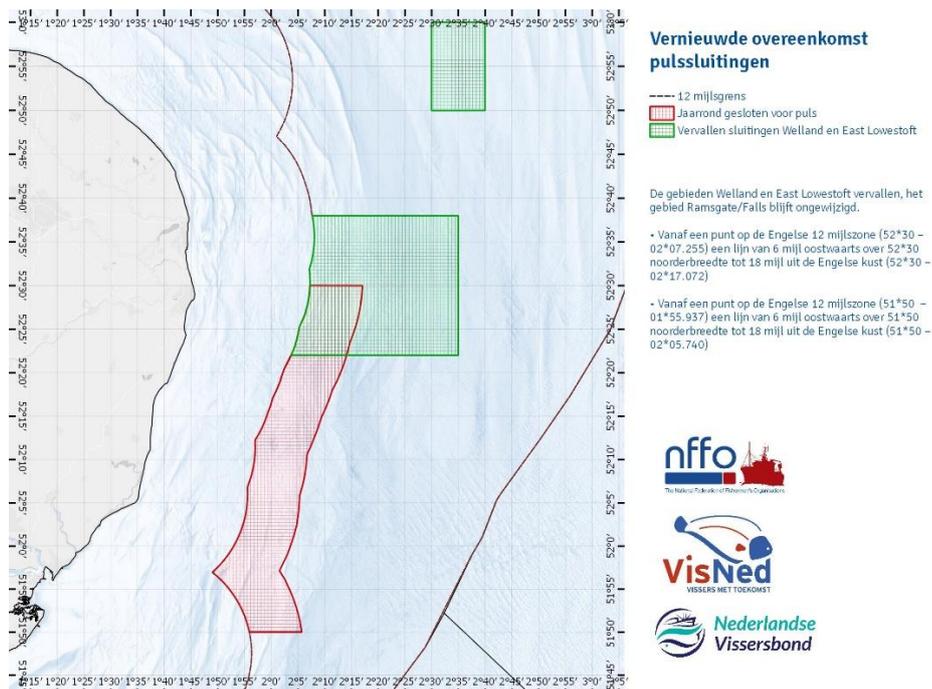
1. It was agreed that the voluntary spatial separation agreement was without prejudice to the wider debate about pulse fishing and in particular the overhaul of the EU Technical Conservation Regulation
2. It was agreed that the agreement had been honoured by all parties throughout the year. One infringement had been addressed through a conditional fine and there had been no repeat incursions
3. Communications between the parties had been strong, with any confusions or misunderstandings issues dealt with quickly
4. Dutch fishermen accepted the reasons for the voluntary closed areas, even if they were not exactly happy to have additional constraints on where they fish
5. Fishermen in the Thames estuary, considered that the agreement had worked well and had provided a degree of protection within which they could operate safely
6. Fishermen from East Anglia considered that the agreement could be improved by a realignment of the area boundaries.

2019

1. It was agreed to maintain the closed area in the Thames Estuary, with the same conditions that had applied in 2018.



2. It was agreed to revise the closed areas off East Anglia by replacing the current two areas, with a single area running north to south parallel with the coast, with a western boundary on the 12 limit and the eastern boundary along a parallel line at 18 miles from the coast.



3. It was agreed to maintain the closed areas in the Thames Estuary and off East Anglia for 12 months
4. The agreement will be reviewed in 12 months and strong lines of communication will be maintained throughout the year to monitor the performance of the closed areas.
5. It was agreed to prepare a report on the conclusions of the meeting for circulation to the parties and other interested parties before final adjustments and sign off.
6. The meeting also discussed significant distributional shifts in the species which had habitually been found in the Southern North Sea. A number of potential causal factors behind this shift were identified but the weight to be accorded to each was complex. The effects of the changes included the collapse of inshore fisheries on both sides of the North Sea. It was agreed that it was important to:
 - Share fishing industry information on the changes being observed
 - Work with fisheries scientists to ensure that the information going into stock assessments is relevant and up to date
 - Press for management measures which reflected these changing conditions with measures tailored to local conditions in the Southern North Sea as far as possible

Against this background, it was agreed to raise the interconnected issues with European level organisations including the North Sea Advisory Council and the European Association of Fish Producer Organisations.

23rd January 2019

Signed

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations

VisNed

Ned. Vissersbond