

Dundalk Cackle Natura Permits Policy 2021-2025

This document sets down the policy for eligibility for a Natura Permit to fish for cockles in Dundalk Bay, without prejudice to the Minister's discretion to determine if fishing will be permitted in any particular year, whether from a sea-fishing boat or by other means. The Minister reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

Cockle dredge fishery

1. Permits may be issued, on application, to qualifying vessels.
2. Permits will normally be issued in the first instance to 'priority group 1' – i.e. those vessels that have already established track record with the Department in the years 2009-2013 or vessels that have acquired the capacity of a vessel with such established track record. No new applications to establish track record will be accepted.
3. The Minister reserves the right to further limit the number of permits in any particular year and/or to amend the policy for issuing of permits.
4. In relation to priority group 1 vessels, the following rules shall apply in relation to the transfer of track record with capacity:
 - A. Track record attached to a priority group 1 vessel shall transfer with the vessel's capacity.
 - B. Where such capacity is transferred to a replacement vessel, the replacement vessel's capacity must consist of a minimum of 75% priority group 1 track record capacity in order to participate in the fishery.
 - C. The transfer of capacity shall not result in an increase in the number of vessels eligible for inclusion in priority group 1 (i.e. no splitting of track record is permitted).
 - D. Following a transfer, any unused balance of capacity shall cease to have priority group 1 status.
 - E. All transfers of capacity with track record must be notified to the Department. Failure to notify the Department may result in loss of track record.
5. The Minister may issue additional permits for the fishery in any given year, where in the opinion of the Minister, data on uptake of permits and / or activity by priority group 1 vessels suggests that the catch by those vessels will not exceed the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for that year.
6. If the TAC is 1,000 tonnes or greater in any given year, the Minister may issue additional permits to persons other than priority group 1. In such circumstances, an additional permit may be issued for every 30 tonnes TAC above the 1,000 threshold.
 - A. Such additional permits shall be allocated through a lottery system. This will involve the random selection of a number of candidates for permits from a pool of eligible applicants. Those selected shall be recorded on a list in the order that they are selected.
 - B. Where an additional permit is available to be allocated, it shall be offered to the first candidate on the list. If that candidate does not accept the permit, it shall be offered to the next candidate on the list. This process shall be followed until the available additional permits have been allocated.
 - C. Once a list of permit candidates has been established through a lottery, that list shall be maintained for the duration of this permits policy.

Cockle hand-gathering fishery

1. A maximum of 20 hand gathering permits will be issued.
2. If demand exceeds 10, but is less than 20, permits may restrict hand gathering to portions of the season and / or to specified areas.
3. If demand exceeds 20, the number will be reduced to 20 by simple lottery.
4. Hand gatherers of 16 or 17 years must be accompanied by another permit holder of 18 years or older at all times.