

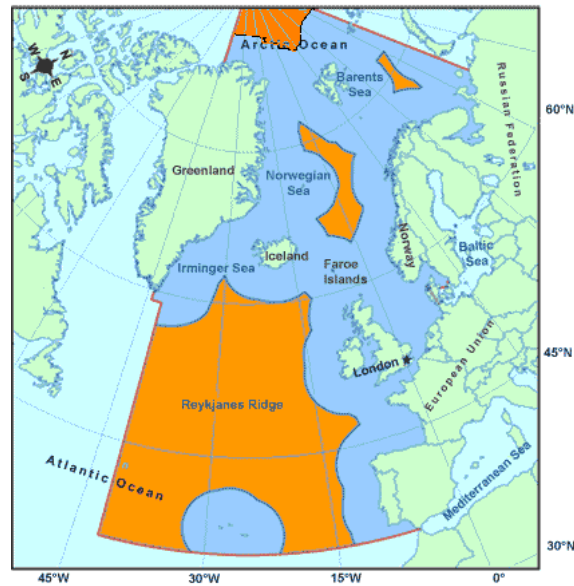


**North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission**  
**Contracting Parties: Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the EU, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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The high seas of the NEAFC Regulatory Area inside the NEAFC Convention Area in the North-East Atlantic are shown shaded on the map below.



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**World Ocean Day 8 June – Our Oceans our Responsibility**

NEAFC, the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation of the North East Atlantic, celebrates the World Ocean Day by marking 10 years of progress in long time conservation and management of fish resources and fisheries in the North East Atlantic

**Today NEAFC releases a Fishery Status Report with details of the fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. The report reflects the breadth of NEAFC's approach and efforts to manage fisheries and biodiversity responsibly and sustainably in the marine environment.**

This contrasts with **scare** stories about fisheries, often based on what has been termed faith based or sound bite science overlooking the importance of fisheries in poverty alleviation, food security and as the economic basis in inland and coastal areas.

## **How did NEAFC get there?**

### **1. WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED**

In 1999 the Contracting Parties of NEAFC established a permanent Secretariat with a view to increase the efficiency of the organisation and its ability to reach set targets.

At the same time NEAFC adopted its Scheme of Control and Enforcement, entering into force 2000. The NEAFC Scheme has all the tools for monitoring, surveillance and control, securing compliance and control areas, where bottom fishing is banned.

The renowned NEAFC black lists of IUU vessels and the Port State Control Scheme ensure that free riders cannot operate in the North East Atlantic.

In line with developments in international law the 1982 NEAFC Convention was amended in 2004 and 2006, giving NEAFC improved tools to find the correct balance between conservation and utilisation and in a holistic, integrated process, based on precautionary and ecosystem approaches, secure the participation of those stakeholders that are affected by adopted measures - in short to ensure responsible fisheries in the NEAFC Area.

Regulations and measures setting exploitation levels for all fisheries in the high seas have been brought into place. Fisheries management plans and harvest rules have been agreed for the major fisheries and are being developed for the rest.

NEAFC has agreed precautionary measures to close areas to bottom fisheries in order to protect vulnerable deep-water habitats and deep-water corals.

NEAFC was the first Regional Fisheries Management Organisation to undergo an independent international performance review. The report of the NEAFC performance review panel has been in the public domain since November 2006. The review was positive.

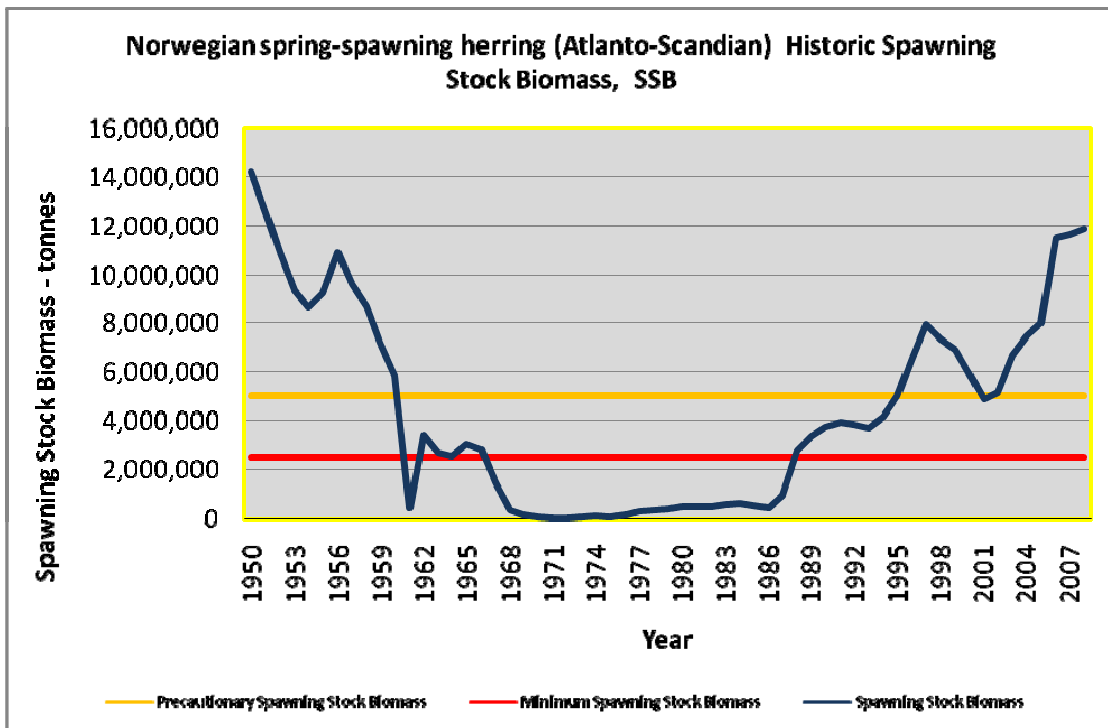
NEAFC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES, which provides all scientific advice to the organisation, and with the OSPAR Commission, with a mandate to protect and conserve the marine environment in the North-East Atlantic. NEAFC has signed an Agreement of Cooperation with the International Maritime Organisation. It has approached the International Seabed Authority on a similar arrangement. These are developments in recent years in a process aimed at increasing cooperation with other intergovernmental organisations, which monitor and regulate human activities, other than fisheries, in the marine environment. If NEAFC closes areas to fishing gears that affect vulnerable marine ecosystems it will invite other international bodies, which have the competence, to introduce similar prohibitions for intrusive activities within these areas.

NEAFC has closely followed international meetings in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, FAO and participates in a number of FAO and FAO initiated projects. It has participated in United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, the UN Working Group (on the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity) and the Informal Consultation of

States Parties to UNFSA. The NEAFC Secretariat participates in the global Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network, RSN.

## 2. SOME SELECTED RESULTS

A remarkable success story is the adoption of national and NEAFC management measures for the Norwegian Spring Spawning herring (Atlanto-Scandian), which has secured the rebuilding of the largest stock in the North East Atlantic and the largest herring stock in the world, yielding annual sustainable catches of over a million tonnes. The remarkable history of this stock, which virtually disappeared in 1970, but has now been rebuilt to former post war levels is reflected in the graph below.



NEAFC has also been able to accommodate changes in the scientific perception of stocks (mackerel and redfish) and/or sudden changes in recruitment (blue whiting) necessitating painful sharp reduction in total allowable catches.

## 3. COMBATING IUU FISHING

The NEAFC tools to combat IUU fishing are part of the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement, first agreed in 1999 and continuously adapted to meet new challenges in the fight against free riders in the fisheries regulated by NEAFC.

The two main tools have been the blacklisting of vessels under flags of non-Contracting Parties to NEAFC and the Port State Control System which controls all the landings of frozen fish into foreign harbours in the NEAFC Convention Area.

NEAFC introduced blacklists of vessels from non-Contracting Parties, which undermine the effectiveness of its regulations in 2005. Since then 26 vessels have been put on the B-list. Last year only two vessels have been observed in the area. 3 have left the NEAFC Area and for 5 the fate is unknown. 8 have been scrapped, 3 have been sitting in

harbours for several years and 3 have been removed from the B-list after application. Blacklisting has hit transport vessels as well as vessels fishing.

1<sup>st</sup> May 2007 NEAFC introduced its Port State Control System. The results have been remarkable. The system was introduced without major problems and the authorities involved have carefully followed the timelines set out thus not impeding the flow of legal fish to European processors. The measure has been deemed to have had dramatic effect on the amounts of illegal frozen fish in Europe, reducing levels of IUU fish significantly. As emphasised by Norwegian and Russian Prime Ministers Jens Stoltenberg and Vladimir Putin recently illegal landings of Cod from the Barents Sea have been reduced from levels above 100,000 thousands to levels around 10,000 tonnes.

#### **4. PROTECTING VULNERABLE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS IN THE HIGH SEAS OF THE NORTH EAST ATLANTIC**

The need to conserve vulnerable deep-sea habitats and species has been high on the NEAFC agenda in recent years. During this period NEAFC has requested scientific information and advice on vulnerable deep-sea habitats. This has not been available in a number of instances, pending more research. It is well known that the current science surrounding temperate area closures is uncertain. Consequently NEAFC has moved forward in a precautionary and adaptive manner. In this regard, the NEAFC Contracting Parties recognise the importance of dialogue and collaboration with responsible fisheries operators and the value of industry information and experience in developing responsible fishing techniques and adapting gear, as well as implementation methods to avoid or mitigate significant adverse impacts on VMEs.

Already in 2002 NEAFC closed an area in the Rockall Area to protect juvenile fish and in 2004 NEAFC adopted an interim ban on bottom fishing in a large area on the Reykjanes Ridge (the northern part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge) and four seamounts adjacent to the Ridge.

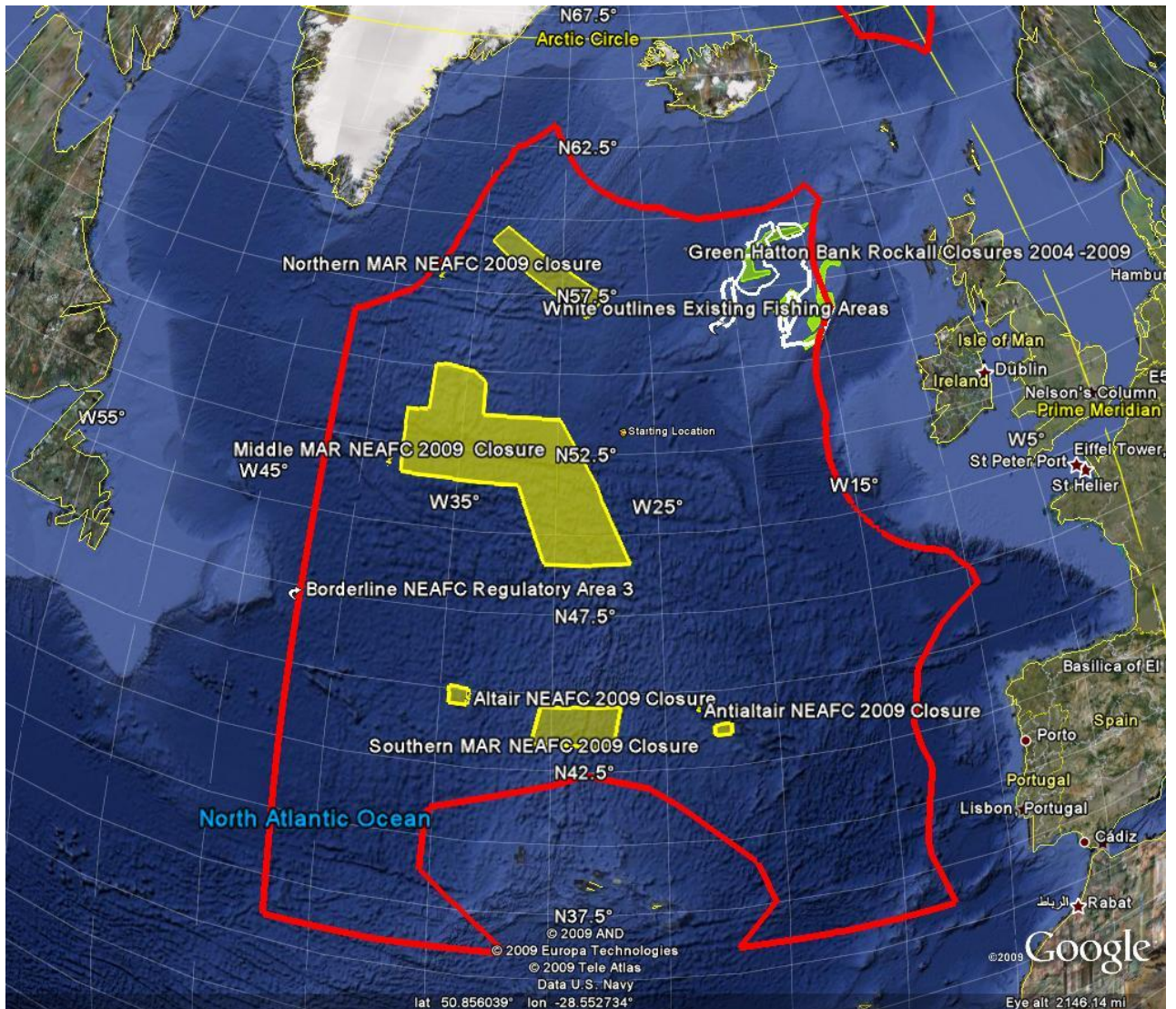
In 2007 NEAFC closed five areas in the Rockall – Hatton Bank area to bottom fishing to protect deep-water corals.

NEAFC had previously agreed to reduce effort in all deep-water bottom fisheries by 35%.

NEAFC in 2006 prohibited fisheries with gillnets, entangling nets and trammel nets in depths below 200 m and introduced measures to remove and dispose of unmarked or illegal fixed gear and retrieve lost gear to minimise ghost fishing.

In July 2008 NEAFC adopted additional comprehensive measures on bottom fishing activities in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. These were supplemented at its 2008 Annual Meeting with specific operational procedures.

Moreover, in April 2009, NEAFC decided to close five large areas on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge in the high seas in the North East Atlantic to bottom fisheries in order to protect VMEs from significant adverse impacts. A map of the full extent of the NEAFC closures is attached.



The combined size of the closed areas is estimated at 333,000 km<sup>2</sup> covering a large portion of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, an area larger than the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland combined.

If scientific research demonstrates in the future that there are sub-areas where no vulnerable marine ecosystems are found within the areas referred to in this measure, the measure shall be amended in order to exclude those sub-areas from the prohibition. This is a dynamic process and, in that context, NEAFC commits itself both to keeping under continuous review the measures currently in place and to adjust those measures in the light of available scientific information and advice.

NEAFC runs a public website ([www.neafc.org](http://www.neafc.org)) which brings all information on its activities into the public domain.

## **5. OTHER WORLD OCEAN INITIATIVES**

On 25 September 2009 NEAFC will invite the London embassies of Contracting Parties and cooperating non Contracting Parties and all observers to NEAFC Headquarters in central London for a briefing on the achievements of the organisation.

Attention will be drawn on the NEAFC website to activities at the UN and FAO related to the theme: Our Oceans, Our Responsibility.