



Iascach Intíre Éireann  
Inland Fisheries Ireland

# Stage 1 - Appropriate Assessment Screening

## Conclusion Statement

### Introduction:

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) are the Irish state body responsible for the protection, management and conservation of the inland fisheries and sea angling resources. In accordance with the EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS 2011, as amended, IFI are required to determine if plans or projects that they propose, or wish to adopt, could act either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects to cause a significant effect on a European site.

This determination is carried out following a review of the Appropriate Assessment Screening document submitted to IFI for review, and is the result of the Inland Fisheries Ireland comprehensive and objective Appropriate Assessment determination process.

This process is aligned with the IFI vision to position Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources as sustainably as possible for the benefit of future generations. This document informs stakeholders of this commitment and its rationale by outlining the decision-making process and IFI's final determination on the specific plan or project below, with a clear and transparent justification.

### Synopsis:

This review is carried out by an independent external environmental expert agency that provides professional advice if an Appropriate Assessment (NIS) is required for the plan or project, or not. A further review of this process is then carried out by a relevant Inland Fisheries Ireland Head of Function who will either validate the conclusion of the determination, or not, as appropriate.

As part of the EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS 2011, as amended, and in accordance with Regulation (18) (a) Inland Fisheries Ireland as a public authority shall make available for inspection any determination that it makes in relation to a plan or project and provide reasons for that determination, as soon as may be after the making of the determination or giving the notice, as appropriate, by members of the public during office hours of the offices of the authority and shall also make the determination or notice available in electronic form including by placing the documents on the authority's website.

This determination will be available on the IFI website at <https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/what-we-do/conservation-and-development/determinations>.

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| Project Reference                                   | DET-2026-000307                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Project Name                                        | Oyster Dredging Blacksod                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Project Description                                 | Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the statutory body with the responsibility for the protection, development and management of the inland fishery resource within the State. As part of their responsibility to manage the Inland Fisheries resource, IFI are required to issue licenses to native oyster fishers that permit them to carry out dredging for native oysters in specified areas around the country. One of the areas where oyster dredging is permitted is in Blacksod Bay in County Mayo. This project aims to assess the potential for significant effects that the licensed dredging could have on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites and identify the mitigation measures that may be necessary to ensure that the licensed dredging for oysters does not have significant effects on those sites or the protected habitats and species within them. |
| Accompanying Report                                 | Oyster_Dredging_in_Blacksod_Bay_Appropriate_Assessment__Screening_2026.pdf,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Consultations</b>                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Agency                                              | Observations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>European Sites</b>                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Site Name (1)                                       | IE0000470 - Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex SAC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Proximity / Connection to Site                      | The works are on Blacksod Bay and directly in this SAC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Qualifying Interest                                 | <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</p> <p>Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]</p> <p>Reefs [1170]</p> <p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</p> <p>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]</p> <p>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]</p> <p>Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150]</p> <p>Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0]</p> <p>Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</p> <p>Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]</p>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Connections                                         | The oyster dredging takes place within Blacksod Bay and by the nature of the activity disturbs seafloor habitats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Effect                                              | <p><i>Potential Effects:</i> Yes</p> <p><i>Significant:</i> No</p> <p><i>Reason:</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Assessment &amp; Determination</b>               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Assessment of likely significance of effects</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Dredging in Blacksod Bay and applying a precautionary principle, it has been concluded that oyster dredging may pose a risk to the fine sand mollusc species and marine flora such as Brown Seaweed and Eelgrass within Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex SAC. Mitigation measures regarding Oyster Dredging in Blacksod Bay are required to control this activity and limit its ecological impacts.

It may be appropriate to:

1. Introduce a limit on the number of oysters each boat can catch and remove each season
2. Divide Blacksod Bay into sections with a rotation of the sections that can be dredged each season
3. Introduce a maximum number of boats that can be permitted to conduct oyster dredging
4. Introduce a shorter oyster dredging season
5. Limit the number of days a licensed boat can dredge for each season
6. Specify a policy for handling and return of bycatch species
7. Introduce a minimum size for removal of oysters with this less than the specified size returned to the sea floor

## Determination

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Statement) is required for Oyster Dredging in Blacksod Bay to further evaluate potential mitigation measures and the ecological impact of oyster dredging.

Conclusion: NIS Required, effect on European site or protected species likely or uncertain without implementing mitigation measures necessary for the protection of Natura 2000 sites.

We, the undersigned, having carefully considered the information referred to above, agree with and adopt the reasoning and conclusions presented

Validated by: Barry Fox

Date: 14-10-2026

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Head of Function



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