

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Assessment of the likely effects of the proposed cultivation of oysters (*Crassostrea gigas*), using bag and trestles, at Sites T05/588A and T05/589A in Oysterhaven, Co. Cork on the Conservation Objectives of the adjacent Sovereign Islands SPA (Site Code 004124) and the Old Head of Kinsale SPA (Site Code 004021).

Project Description:

Haven Shellfish Ltd. proposes to cultivate oysters (*C. gigas*) using bags and trestles on an area of foreshore at Sites T05/588A and T05/589A in Oysterhaven, Co. Cork. The area of foreshore involved at Site T05/588A is 0.88Ha while the area of foreshore involved at Site T05/589A is 2.425Ha. It is intended that hatchery produced seed would be introduced onto the sites and it is anticipated that 10 tonnes of oysters would be produced on each of the sites annually by end of Year 3 of the activity.

The proposed aquaculture sites are not located within a designated Natura 2000 site. The sites are located some 4.0Km from the nearest boundary of the Sovereign Islands SPA (Site Code 004124) and circa 13Km from the nearest boundary of the Old Head of Kinsale SPA (Site Code 004021).

Sovereign Islands SPA

The Sovereign Islands are two very small islands located approximately 1 km off the Cork coastline at the entrance to Oysterhaven Bay. The islands are rocky stacks separated by a narrow sound of about 20 m width. The islands are important for breeding seabirds, with most on the eastern stack. This site is of ornithological importance mainly for the breeding colony of Cormorant, which is the largest in County Cork and is of National Importance. The population of Great Black-backed Gulls is also of National Importance.

The Features of Interest of the SPA are:

- Cormorants

The Conservation Objectives of the SPA¹ are:

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA: Cormorant

¹ NPWS (2015) Conservation objectives for Sovereign Islands SPA [004124]. Generic Version 4.0. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Old Head of Kinsale SPA

The Old Head is a 5 km long headland formed of steeply inclined beds of rock. The site comprises a section of the cliffs on the western side of the narrow isthmus leading to the Head. These are vertical rock cliffs providing optimum habitat for ledge nesting seabirds. The Old Head is the largest seabird colony on the south coast between the Bull Rock and the Saltee Islands. It supports nationally important populations of Kittiwake and Guillemot as well as smaller numbers of Fulmar, Shag, Herring Gull and Razorbill.

The Features of Interest of the SPA are:

- Kittiwake
- Guillemot

The Conservation Objectives of the SPA² are:

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA: Kittiwake, Guillemot

Impact of the proposed aquaculture activity on the adjacent Natura 2000 sites

The cultivation of shellfish at these sites will produce faeces and pseudofaeces. However, the build-up of excess organic matter beyond the footprint of the sites is not considered likely and the impact on benthic habitats is not considered significant.

No chemicals or hazardous substances will be used during the production process.

There will be no reduction in habitat area within the SPAs arising from the shellfish production activities.

There will be no habitat or species fragmentation and no reduction in species density in the SPA arising from the shellfish production activities.

There will be no disturbance to key species or habitats within the SPAs.

Water quality within the SPAs will not be impacted.

Given the nature and scale of the proposed aquaculture production activities the contribution to climate change is considered insignificant.

There is no spatial overlap of the aquaculture activities with Natura sites. In addition, there would be no interference with key relationships that define the function of the sites. The culture activities will not result in habitat loss, there will not be significant disturbance to key species and there will be no habitat or species fragmentation. There will be no direct discharge of pollutants into the environment during the works and water quality will not be affected. Consequently, it is concluded that the culture of shellfish, as proposed in Oysterhaven Bay does not pose significant risk to the conservation features of the adjacent Sovereign Islands SPA (Site Code 004124) and / or the Old Head of Kinsale SPA and it can be concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

Prepared by Marine Institute,

28 June 2016

² NPWS (2015) *Conservation objectives for Old Head of Kinsale SPA [004021]. Generic Version 4.0.* Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.