

FAQs

How does the SSMO Licensing process work for potential new entrants?

When the SSMO Board make the decision to hold a new licencing round this is then advertised on the SSMO website and in the press. Interested parties are invited to request an application pack. When applications are received they are only seen by the SSMO Inshore Coordinator who then anonymises them in advance of them going to the Licensing Sub Group. The Group make recommendations to the Board of Directors who then make the final decision. For data protection reasons no list is kept of anyone who is interested in a licence or of anyone who has not been successful in obtaining a licence. There has never been a waiting list – decisions are taken in light of the stock assessment and the harvest control rules.

Licensing Flow Chart is attached

How does the succession process work for SSMO licences?

In 2015 the SSMO Board introduced a process of succession for SSMO licences as a method of getting younger people into the industry and of keeping vessels in the Shetland fleet. Succession for family members was always part of the SSMO regulations but this was extended so that SSMO licence holders who were thinking of retiring could add someone to their licence and, after a period of one year, that person with the permission of the SSMO Board, could take over the SSMO licence.

As the SSMO Regulations state – no value is attributable to a SSMO licence.

How are Fishery Management decisions taken?

Decisions are based on annual stock assessments and advice from the NAFC Marine Centre alongside knowledge gained from local fishermen. The stock assessment process was peer reviewed in 2020 by Dr Mike Bell of Herriot Watt University and Dr Oliver Tully and Dr Guillermo Martin based at the Marine Institute of Ireland and both reviews were very favourable.

Why are there fewer SSMO licences now than when the Regulating Order started?

When the Regulating Order became law then anyone who had a track record of fishing within the 6 mile limit around Shetland was given the opportunity to apply for a SSMO licence. This resulted in 166 licences being issued in the year 2000. Numbers have never been so high again with a lot of fishermen deciding they did not want to retain the licence. Since then numbers have fluctuated somewhat with 133 being issued in 2001, 129 in 2002 and 109 in 2003. Licence numbers currently stand at 108. At no time was it ever said that, in the future, no Shetland fisherman would ever be refused a SSMO licence.

What is meant by a species specific SSMO licence?

SSMO were granted permission by Marine Scotland to issue species and areas specific licences. The idea behind this was that in 2016, when it was decided to have a licensing round, the ability to issue creel licences was still available to the Board even though velvet crab was going through a stock rebuilding process. At that time 4 creel licences were issued without the ability to fish for velvet crab and a further licence was issued which was both species and area specific.

What are the current SSMO creel limits?

Current SSMO creel limits stand at 600 of which no more than 240 may be used for Velvet crab. The vast majority of SSMO licence holders have far fewer than this number of creels. Creel numbers are reviewed on a regular basis by the SSMO Board. SSMO fishermen are issued with numbered creel tags and also escape gaps for creels over and above 240 in number. Any complaints received around creel numbers are passed to Marine Scotland Compliance. SSMO are not responsible for monitoring Hobby Fishermen's creel numbers. Marine Scotland have not placed a restriction on creel numbers for Hobby Fishermen, instead, they have restrictions on daily catch numbers which cannot be sold commercially.

What are the restrictions on SSMO licenced scallop vessels?

Scallop vessels have restrictions both in size and dredge numbers. There are also Closed Areas which should not be dredged in and a restriction in hours – there should be no dredging between 9.00pm and 6.00am. Marine Scotland is making Remote Electronic Monitoring in the scallop fleet mandatory in 2021.

How is SSMO funded?

SSMO is mainly funded through Licence Fees and an annual grant from the SIC although funding from other sources are always sought. The organisation employs a part-time Inshore Coordinator who reports to a Board of Directors all of whom are volunteers.

What is the relationship between SSMO and Marine Scotland?

SSMO are part of the RIFG network and therefore work closely with Marine Scotland.

The Regulating Order requires SSMO to keep the Scottish Ministers advised of any changes to their rules and regulations.

There is a MOU between Marine Scotland Compliance and SSMO which is reviewed every 5 years and any complaints received are passed on to Marine Scotland Compliance to investigate.