

The European Parliament votes to ban so-called fly fishing in a certain channel | Fishing

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The European Parliament has voted to ban “fly-fishing” fishing in French territorial waters of the English Channel after reports that the method, also known as bottom seining, is having a “devastating” effect on local fishermen.

Campaign organizers described the result as a victory for small fishermen. Organizations representing coastal fishing communities on both sides of the English Channel have warned that industrial trawling methods, including fly fishing, are reducing their livelihoods and the marine ecosystem.

Although the European Parliament does not have the power to ban the fishing method, MEPs said Tuesday’s vote sent an important message to decision-makers about the impact of fly fishing on inshore fishing communities. The vote on the amendment to the Common Fisheries Policy, which includes access to territorial waters, is now being discussed by the European Commission, Parliament and EU Member States.

Last year, the UK was accused of allowing vessels using the fishing method “unrestricted access” to the English Channel without properly assessing the impact on fish, the seabed or the livelihoods of coastal communities.

Diagram showing how the wings of the nets increase the catch

“This is a very important day for the ocean and coastal fishing communities,” said Laetitia Bisiaux, project manager of the French environmental organization Bloom. “The members of parliament were told about the destructive effects of bottom seines by fishermen who use this technique themselves. MPs listened to warnings that have long been ignored.

“The vote is a good political message from the EU Parliament to fishermen and member states to ban this destructive technique,” he said.

Fly fishing boats, also known as Danish, Scotch or bottom seines, pull lead-weighted ropes along the seabed at either end of a net that encircles and captures entire schools of fish.

One expert told the Guardian the method has between 4 and 11 times the “killing power” of coastal fishing vessels.

The amendment to the fisheries policy was proposed by French Green MEP Caroline Roose, who said it was an “important first step” towards a ban.

Roose said: “Yesterday’s vote sends a clear message of support to fishermen and NGOs who are calling for a moratorium on seine in the English Channel. The amendment itself allows the French government to ban its use near the French coast.

“This is just the first step, as any decision to limit or ban seining in the English Channel must be negotiated with the European Commission and member states. Public pressure is key to ensure yesterday’s decision is actually implemented.

Campaigners and organizations representing small-scale fishermen in the UK welcomed the news and said it was time for the British Government to act.

In June 2021, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced that it was considering the potential impact of fly fishing on the UK fishing industry. The UK licensed 15 fly boats between 2011 and 2021.

Jeremy Percy, founder and senior adviser at Low Impact Fishers of Europe, said: “It’s a long way to go, but at least Europe seems to be tackling the problem. We have become very efficient at fishing, but management and regulations have not kept up.

“We are all fishermen and we all need and deserve to earn a living, but this should never come at the expense of another fishing sector, and especially one that is so vulnerable, such as the UK’s smaller fleet.

“It’s all the more depressing that we’ve left the EU, but we’re still allowing the large-scale destruction of major EU ships to continue unabated.”

Greenpeace UK Oceans Campaigner Fiona Nicholls said: “Encouraging news from France – French fishermen are being listened to. Now is the time for UK politicians to listen to what our fishermen need at home.

“To properly protect the UK’s marine protected areas, the government’s priority must be to ban destructive industrial fishing such as fly fishing in 2022. Using the post-Brexit licensing powers set out in the Fisheries Act, they can act quickly to protect our oceans. and fishing communities.

A Defra spokesman said: “We acknowledge concerns about fishing effort in the English Channel, including methods such as fly seines, and are working with industry on these issues.

“We have already stopped pulse-throwing by EU and English-registered vessels in UK waters and all future fisheries management decisions will be based on the best available evidence.”