

**Marine Conservation Zone: Selection Assessment Document**

<b>Version and Issue date</b>	<b>Amendments made</b>
V1.0 07.09.11	Draft final recommendations refined by the RSG and Local Groups in July 2011 and finalised by the RSG 2/3 August 2011.

<b>1. Site name</b> South Mersea draft Reference Area no. 2	<b>3. Site surface area</b> 20ha                      0.2km <sup>2</sup>
<b>2. Site centre location</b> ETRS89 N51 46' 3.782" E0 56' 55.255" N51 46.063' E0 56.921' (N.B. WGS 84 UTM 31N coordinates are provided in the map vertices)	<b>4. Biogeographic region</b> Southern North Sea

**5. Features identified for specific protection within the South Mersea<sup>1</sup>**

Feature type	Feature name	Area
Habitat FOCI	Native Oyster beds	No data available
Species FOCI Low	Native Oyster ( <i>O.edulis</i> )	No data available

**6. Other features occurring within the South Mersea (to be protected)**

none

**7. Map of site (see below)**

**8. Site summary**

This site, within rMCZ 3 (Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries), was suggested by the shellfisheries sector as a suitable area for protection of Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) and Oyster beds. It lies in the subtidal area, due south of Mersea Island and is a rectangle of 750 x 250 m. A wider diameter was not considered essential as the oyster bed is naturally bounded by depth, and for this reason the length of the site was made greater than 500m. Although the project has no data points or spatial data, oysters and oyster beds occur in substantial numbers in this rMCZ and are thought to be some of the best examples in the region. The Blackwater Oystermen have prepared a map, with the Essex Wildlife Trust, showing distribution and density according to their own knowledge and this was presented at the Local Group meeting in July 2011. Records for Native Oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) or Native Oyster beds will have to be obtained before this rRA can go forward. The native oysters in this location are currently harvested but the Blackwater Oystermen are prepared to cease harvesting once the RA is in place.

**9. Detailed site description**

For further details please see detailed site description for rMCZ 3.

**10. Site boundary**

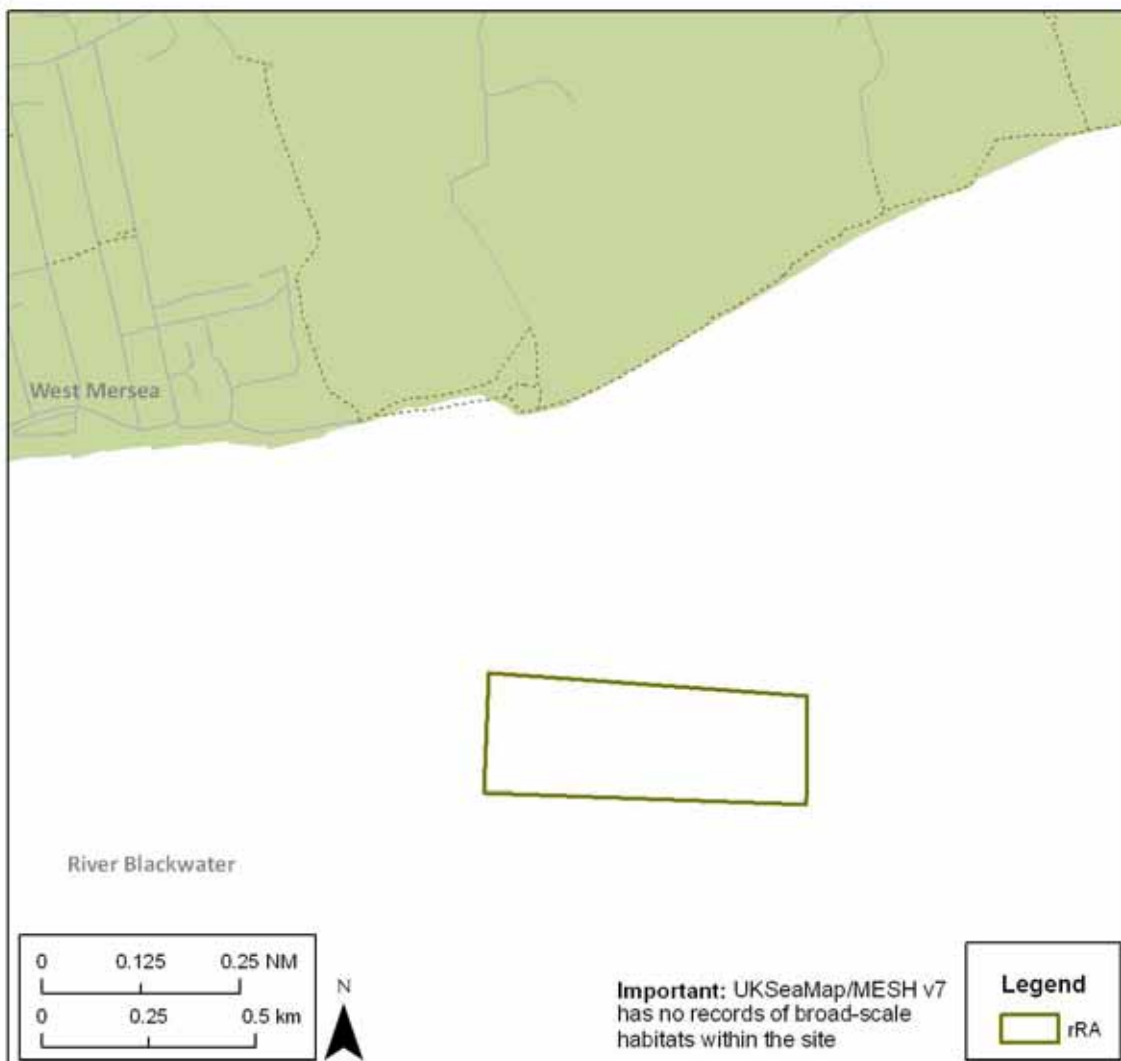
The boundary was drawn by the shellfisheries sector as described above.

**11. Conservation objectives**

Individual conservation objective forms for each feature can be found in Appendix 1. In selecting the reference areas, stakeholders have identified specific features that merit reference area protection. ALL features in a reference area will, by default, have a Conservation Objective of "RECOVER to Reference Condition."

<sup>1</sup> Sources of information relating to these features are listed in Section 13.

South Mersea  
Recommended Reference Area no 2



Features to be protected within reference area:

Native Oyster Beds  
Native Oyster (*O. edulis*)

**Important:** Native Oysters and Native Oyster Beds are known to be present within the site however data is not currently available



This map and list show the main features selected by the RSG for inclusion within this Draft Reference Area. However, **ALL** features (including any additional) falling within this area would be given Reference Area protection.

Map and coordinates displayed in WGS84, UTM Zone 31 North.  
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**NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION.**

## South Mersea rRA no 2

### 12. Sites to which this site is related

This site is contained within the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries rMCZ 3.

### 13. Supporting documentation (information relating to ENG features only)

Information	Type of information	Source	Name of survey	Dates
Native Oyster ( <i>Ostrea edulis</i> )	Anecdotal evidence	Blackwater Oystermen		2011
Oyster beds	Anecdotal evidence	Blackwater Oystermen		2011

### References

Please refer to the references in the site description of rMCZ 3.

### 14. Stakeholder support for the site

The RSG as a group reached consensus that this site should be put forward in their final recommendations.

Individual sectors wishing to note their support or concerns about the site recorded the following at the final RSG meeting in August 2011; their comments have been transcribed verbatim from the form that they completed:

SECTOR	ORGANISATION	COMMENT for Clone Point rRA 2 South Mersea
Yachting	RYA	Oppose.
Sea Angling		Not acceptable to the RSA sector.
Birds	RSPB	Support. Support taking two smaller sites forward instead of larger dRA, as proposed by Essex WT + oystermen, so that combined area better meets viability target than just option 1.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Support this. Combine with the West Mersea site.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strongly support inclusion of both the smaller areas put forward in place of one larger area which was opposed by angling interests.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support</u> . Green is too small to show any effect. Red should be accepted. <u>Not viable</u> .
IFCA	Kent and Essex IFCA	General support for smaller area - support both areas.
Heritage and Archaeology	English Heritage	Blackwater etc. Possibility of needing to sample peats for I+E landscape reports.

For greater detail on discussions relating to the site and the network, please refer to both RSG and Local Group stakeholder meeting reports at [www.balancedseas.org](http://www.balancedseas.org).

### 15. Evolution of the site recommendations

The Blackwater Oystermen put forward an area (dRA 2 Blackwater Mid Channel) further up the Blackwater Estuary towards Maldon as an RA for native oysters at the Local Group meeting (Essex/Thames/North Kent/Suffolk Local Group meeting 4, April, 2011), but this was unacceptable to recreational sea anglers and recreational sailing sectors. At the July 2011 Local Group meeting, two smaller areas were put forward by the Blackwater Oystermen and Essex Wildlife Trust to replace this larger area: Option 1 within the original dRA2 and option 2 off the south coast of Mersea Island. Option 1 was still considered unacceptable by the RSA and yachting sector but Option 2 was broadly acceptable to the Group as a whole, apart from the RSA sector. The wildlife sector suggested that both Options should be put forward. At the final RSG meeting (2/3 Aug 2011), it was agreed that only Option 2 should be submitted.

For greater detail on discussions relating to the site and the network, please refer to both RSG and Local Group stakeholder meeting reports at [www.balancedseas.org](http://www.balancedseas.org).

### **16. Implications for Stakeholders**

The following issues are associated with this site:

- Recreational sea anglers drift fish through the area and are opposed to any restrictions to catch and release angling.
- Adjacent to an important bait digging site but this will not be affected by the rRA
- Kite surfing may occur
- Sewage outfall considered to be adequately managed

This list represents only the major issues associated with the site. To see all stakeholder discussions, please refer to the Balanced Seas RSG and Local Group meeting reports at [www.balancedseas.org](http://www.balancedseas.org).