



Natural England’s CoastBuster team was created in 2012 to test the feasibility of controlling wild Pacific oysters *Crassostrea gigas* within the inter-tidal zone of the North East Kent Marine Protected Areas using volunteer labour. This was a component of a project launched in 2007 titled “Distribution of Selected Non-Native Species within the Inter-tidal Zone of the North East Kent Marine Protected Areas”. The team was trained, equipped and supervised by Natural England.

The North East Kent Marine Protected areas are located in south-east England between the towns of Whitstable and Deal in the county of Kent. The track distance is approximately 46 km. The sites are recognized for their chalk features, habitats and communities. Designations include Natura 2000 sites, a Marine Conservation Zone, a Ramsar site, an SSSI and a National Nature Reserve. These are shown in figure 2. A baseline of Pacific oyster distribution was established between 2007 – 2008. From this a monitoring programme was designed and priority sections were identified where native species were displaced or oyster reef creation was at an advanced state.

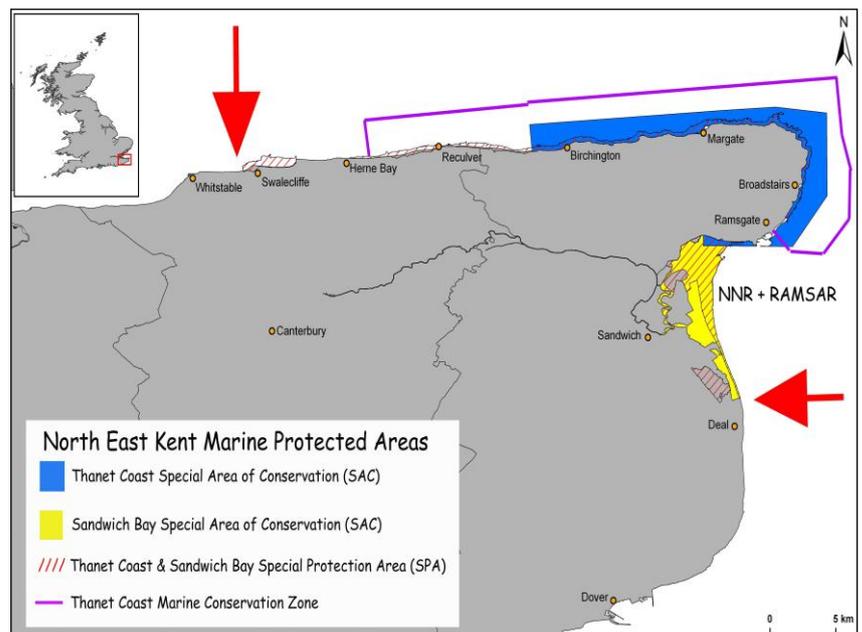


Figure 2 The North East Kent Marine Protected Areas

Three guiding principles were set:

- containment not eradication
- field-work would be a targeted response to priorities identified from the monitoring programme
- long term commitment

A programme of work was initiated in 2012 during which the team reduced the oyster population to a set target per one-km section. When this target was achieved the team relocated to the next priority section identified from the monitoring programme. Best practices as described in the training session were employed on-site. Figure 3 shows team members removing oysters at Kingsgate Bay in Broadstairs. Progress and results up to September 2014 have been pleasing. A total of 87,031 oysters were removed. Total volunteer time on site was 556.75 man-hours. Control transects recorded an increase in oyster numbers but during the same period oyster numbers reduced within a treatment transect. Figure 4 shows baseline peak density per section and sections which have achieved target following volunteer intervention.



Figure 3 Volunteers onsite at Kingsgate Bay

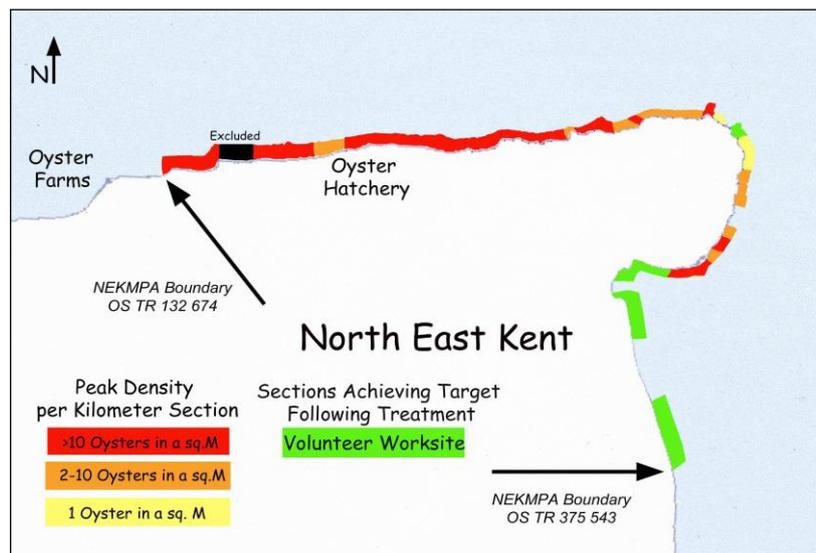


Figure 4 Baseline Density and post treatment progress

A report is produced for Natural England each March to record progress and enable assessment of the long term feasibility of the control work.