

GULF GROUND FISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GGAC) MEETING
(hybrid meeting at the Crown Plaza hotel in Moncton, a virtual option via the Zoom platform was also offered)

March 15, 2023

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. ADT

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

The 2023 meeting of the Gulf Groundfish Advisory Committee was held on March 15, 2023 at the Crown Plaza hotel in Moncton NB; a virtual option via the Zoom platform was also offered to participants who were unable to attend in person. Participants included representatives from the groundfish industry, Indigenous groups, provincial governments (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec), as well as staff from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). A GGAC meeting was held this year, primarily to share the results of new science stock assessment and abundance indices updates, and to solicit members' views on TAC levels and other management measures.

The chair (Mireille Chiasson) welcomed participants, provided guidelines on the use of the Zoom platform, and conducted a roll call.

Before moving on with the agenda, Jason Spingle of the FFAW mentioned to the group that Robert Courtney, a member of the GGAC, has passed since the last meeting and acknowledged Mr. Courtney as a strong advocate for local fishing. Laura Ramsay also shared some words of acknowledgment for the work that was done by Michael MacDonald, he was a member of PEIFA who passed away recently.

DFO Updates

Record of discussion GGAC 2022

The chair mentioned that the only action items from last year was to update the GGAC Terms of Reference. This has been discussed later in the meeting.

Review of Agenda

The chair shared the agenda with the group and it was accepted as is.

Sciences – Summary of Stock Status

Northern Gulf cod (4RS, 3Pn)

Presented by Jordan Ouellette-Plante (DFO science, Quebec region)

An update on stock assessment summary for 4RS, 3Pn Northern Gulf cod was given to the group. Please refer to the presentation for more details.

Greenland halibut (Turbot) 4RST

Presented by Jean-Martin Chamberland (DFO science, Quebec region)

An update on stock assessment summary of the Greenland halibut 4RST was provided to the group. Please refer to the presentation for more details.

Atlantic Halibut 4RST

Presented by Mathieu Desgagnés (DFO science, Quebec region)

An update on stock assessment summary of the Atlantic Halibut 4RST was provided to the group. Please refer to the presentation for more details.

Questions and Comments:

- More discussion will have to take place in regards of the survey due to the increase in the cost of fuel, salaries, etc.
- Members shared concerns around scaling and possible over assessment of biomass.

Action Item:

DFO to provide a breakdown of Atlantic halibut landings for previous years to Melanie Giffin from PEIFA.

Atlantic halibut longline survey

Atlantic halibut longline survey

Presented by Mathieu Desgagnés (DFO science Quebec region)

An overview of the objective of the Atlantic halibut longline survey was provided, which is to fulfill the needs for important scientific data: spawning biomass abundance index; recent levels of fishing exploitation; population size structure; distribution of the species and changes in it; interannual migration patterns; and interaction with other commercial species.

Please refer to the presentation for more details.

Transport Canada Update

Presented by Rob Freake (Transport Canada)

Rob Freake gave multiple updates on different files such as Fishing vessel safety Regulations amendments, addressing known safety risks, vessel registration, statutory requirement, Fishing Vessel - Small Vessel Compliance Program, etc. Please refer to the presentation for more details.

Advice on TAC and Management Measures

Presented by Julien Cormier (DFO, Fisheries and Harbor Management, Gulf region)

The Chair asked members of the Gulf Groundfish Advisory Committee for recommendations on a TAC for the 2023-24 management period for 4RST Greenland halibut, 4RST Atlantic halibut, and 4RS3Pn Cod. The recommendations/comments made by the committee members have been compiled below.

4RST GREENLAND HALIBUT (TURBOT)

Organization / Organisation	Prov.	Recommended TAC / Recommendation TAC
Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union	NL	2400 t ¹
Association des pêcheurs de la Basse-Côte-Nord	QC	2002 t
Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie	QC	2400 t
Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation	QC	2400 t
Association québécoise de l'industrie de la pêche	QC	N/A
Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture	NL	2002 t
Association de gestion halieutique autochtone Mi'Gmak et Malécite	QC	2400 t
Department of Fisheries and Communities	PE	N/A
Oceans North	NS	2002 t

¹ Requested that current fleet shares be maintained

4RST ATLANTIC HALIBUT

Organization / Organisation	Prov.	Recommended TAC / Recommendation TAC	Quota carry forward	Longline Survey
Fish Food and Allied Workers Union	NL	2500 t (45% increase)	15%	75t ²
Atlantic Groundfish Council	NS	2500 t (45% increase)	15%	75t ²
North of Smokey Fishermen's Association	NS	2500 t (45% increase)	15%	75t
Association de pêcheurs de la Basse-Côte-Nord	QC	2230 t (30% increase) – Also ok with 2500t	15%	75t
Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie	QC	2230 t (30% increase)	15%	75t
Association québécoise de l'industrie de la pêche	QC	N/A		
Association des pêcheurs propriétaires des Îles-de-la-Madeleine	QC	N/A		
Union des pêcheurs des Maritimes	NB	1716 t ^{3 4 5}	15%	75t
Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association	PE	1716 t ^{3 4 5}	15%	75t
4Vn Management Board	NS	2500t	15%	75t
Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board	NS	1716 t ^{3 4 5}	15%	75t
Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI	PE	N/A		
Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation	QC	2230 t (30% increase)	15%	75t
NB Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries	NB	1716 t	15%	75t
PEI Department of Fisheries and Communities	PE	1716 t ^{3 4 5}	15%	75t
NS Department of Fisheries & Aquaculture	NS	2500 t	15%	75t
NL Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture	NL	2500 t		
Regroupement des palengriers et pétoncliers unique Madelinots	QC	Increase of 15% per year (next 2 management cycle)	15%	75t
Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie	QC	2500t	15%	75t
Confederacy of Mainland Mi'Kmaq	NS	N/A		
Association de gestion halieutique autochtone Mi'Gmak et Malécite	QC	30% increase or 2500t	15%	75t
Oceans North	NS	10%-15% increase		

FFAW noted that it is a very positive story overall, and that the expansion over the last years has been positive. There was good science in place and this was a success.

² Supports the increase of use of fish, only if the unused quota is redistributed amongst fleets

³ Requesting a review of fleet shares

⁴ In the case where an increase of TAC is approved by the minister, the increase should be divided amongst Gulf Nova Scotia, Gulf Prince Edward Island, Gulf New-Brunswick and Scotia-Fundy)

⁵ Requesting permanency to the temporary mobile gear transfer

Most of the members are agreeing with a 15% quota carry forward.

The majority of the members supported an allocation of 75 t to be set aside from the TAC under section 10 of the *Fisheries Act*, to support the Atlantic halibut longline survey and tagging program.

NORTHERN GULF COD 4RS,3PN

Organization / Organisation	Prov.	Recommended TAC / Recommandation TAC
Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union	NL	650 t (Directed fishery)
Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie	QC	650 t
Lower North Shore Fishermen's Association	QC	650 t
Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec	QC	N/A
Newfoundland and Labrador Dept. of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture	NL	650 t
Atlantic Groundfish Council		1000t
Association québécoise de l'industrie de la pêche		N/A
Ocean North		Maintain closure of directed commercial fishery

Action Items:

DFO to send a draft of recommendations received and a due date to received further recommendations.

Updates

GGAC Terms of Reference

Presented by Julien Cormier (DFO Gulf region)

DFO noted that members will be provided an opportunity to submit comments on the terms of reference by May 15th, 2023.

Update on the Gulf groundfish IFMP

Presented by Julien Cormier (DFO Gulf region)

DFO wishes to form a working group of 10 to 15 people to support them in the development of the IFMP. More information will be sent by email.

Update on rebuilding plans

Presented by Daniel Lapierre (DFO Gulf region)

Daniel Lapierre noted the Department is making good progress in developing four rebuilding plans for groundfish in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence (4T winter flounder, 4T American plaice, 4T,Vn Atlantic cod and 4T white hake). The objective is to have the plans completed by the end of fiscal year 2023. A final draft version will be shared with members of the GGAC in order to obtain feedback from the group.

Questions and Comments:

- Associations shared that it is important to continue the science being done on all species. There is a different dynamic between stocks and we should not only be focusing on one in particular. (Ex. Predation)

Action Items:

Associations are asking to have a meeting once the first draft of the rebuilding plans has been completed.

Other items

The Chair noted that the information on: changes to the NARW measures, the US MMPA, SARP, the Ghost gear Fund, Licencing Policy and Electronic Logbooks (ELOGS) was shared with the group prior to the meeting.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked all the participants, those who made presentations and wished everyone a great fishing season. The Chair concluded the 2023 meeting of the Gulf Groundfish Advisory Committee.