

**2023-2024 CONSERVATION HARVESTING PLAN
REDFISH INDEX FISHERY – UNIT I
MOBILE GEAR FLEET – LESS THAN 19.81 METRES**

Approved: June 14, 2023

This Conservation Harvesting Plan (CHP) applies to all groundfish licence holders with mobile gear vessels less than 19.81 metres regardless of homeport, fishing redfish in Unit 1 (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) divisions 4RST, 3Pn & 4Vn (Jan-May)) during the period from **May 15, 2023 to May 14, 2024**.

When fishing in another NAFO division in a particular area, the CHP for that area will apply. It is to be noted that this CHP is subject to change following ministerial decisions or annual review. Directed fishing for any other groundfish species will require a separate CHP.

The conservation measures during the fishery are as follows:

1. Protection of spawning fish and concentration of juveniles

The protection of fish during the spawning period and areas where there are concentrations of juveniles is a priority that the Department and the industry consider very important for the reconstruction of the cod stock in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The following conservation measures will apply:

- Closure of all groundfish fisheries from April 1 to June 23 in part of the NAFO Division 4R offshore from St. Georges Bay and Port au Port Bay which is a recognized spawning area.
- Permanent closure of all groundfish fisheries, from January 1 to December 31 in part of groundfish fishing areas 4T3 known as Miscou Bank, which is a recognized cod concentration area.
- Permanent closure of all groundfish fisheries from January 1 to December 31 in groundfish fishing area 4T5 known as Shediac Valley, which is recognized as a juvenile area.
- North of the Orphan Bank closure to all groundfish mobile gear fisheries due to a high by-catch of juvenile Greenland halibut (turbot).

2. Fishing Gear

All otter trawl gear type are permitted with a minimum 90 mm diamond mesh size in all parts of the trawl.

3. Fishing Season

To respect the spawning period, fishing activities will not begin before **June 15, 2023 and the season will end October 31, 2023**.

4. By-catch limits

By-catch is defined as the weight of a by-catch species divided by the weight of the directed species, in this case, redfish.

While directing for redfish in Unit 1, the following by-catch provisions will apply:

- Cod 5% per fishing trip
- American plaice 10% per fishing trip
- White hake 10% per fishing trip
- Other species of groundfish 15% per fishing trip

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By-catch of groundfish species **may not be released** unless a condition of licence authorizes to do so.

Certain areas could be closed for fishing for a fleet or specified fleet sectors when a species by-catch exceeds the above percentages.

5. Small Fish Protocol

The small fish protocol that will apply:

Cod	43 cm
American Plaice	30 cm
Witch Flounder	30 cm
White Hake	45 cm
Winter Flounder	25 cm
Yellowtail Flounder	25 cm
Atlantic Halibut	85 cm
Greenland Halibut	44 cm
Redfish	22 cm

Areas will be closed for specified fleet sectors when the number of undersized fish reaches or exceeds 15% of the catch of any of the above species.

6. Dockside Monitoring

Dockside monitoring program (DMP) at 100% of the landings is mandatory.

7. Logbooks & combined forms

Logbooks are mandatory for all fish harvesters with homeports **in the Gulf, Newfoundland and Maritimes Regions**. They must be completed each fishing day before returning to port.

The combined form is mandatory for all fish harvesters with homeports **in the Quebec Region**. Fish harvesters must complete the logbook section of the Combined Form each fishing day.

8. At-sea Observer Coverage

The industry-funded At-Sea Observer Program for the redfish fishery applies at a minimum coverage of 25% of the fishing trips. The at-sea observer coverage is maintained at this level to increase the monitoring of by-catch, and discarding at sea.

9. Catch Monitoring & Test Fishery

Small fish and by-catch fleet closures will be of a minimum duration of 10 days. The cost of conducting all test fisheries will be borne by industry. If a fishery is closed, it will not re-open unless DFO feels that it can be effectively monitored and controlled. If any particular fishery is closed twice during the year because of by-catch or small fish, the fishery may remain closed for the remainder of the year.

10. Other Management Measures

Fishing activities will be conducted between longitude 59 and 65 at depths greater than 100 fathoms.

The Department monitors the level of dumping and discarding of groundfish at sea. If a fleet sector or an individual is suspected of dumping and discarding groundfish at sea, in addition to

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other regulatory options, including fisheries closures and legal proceedings, the industry funded at-sea observer coverage may be increased.

a. Crew registry

As of April 1st, 2021, inshore commercial license holders, and their approved Substitute Operators, must keep records of all the crew members working aboard the vessel on every fishing trip. These records must be maintained by the license holder for a period of five (5) years. This requirement does not apply to pre-1979 corporation license and to any license issued under the authority of the Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licenses Regulations. For further details, refer to the March 17th, 2021, Notice to Fish Harvesters at https://inter-l01.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/applications/opti-opei/notice-avis-detail-eng.php?pub_id=2150&todo=view&type=2 or contact the Licensing Office at 1-877-535-7307 or fishingpeche@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

b. Waste disposal

The licence holder/operator is prohibited from discarding in Canadian fisheries waters from their vessel any item that may be harmful to fish or fish habitat including but not limited to plastics, ropes, fishing gear, garbage bags, fuel, oil, rags, glass, bottles, metal, extruded polystyrene foam (e.g. Styrofoam) and tires.

11. Closures for the protection of corals and sponges

On December 15, 2017, sensitive benthic areas were closed to all fishing using bottom touching gears in order to protect corals and sponges. You will find the coordinates and a map of those closures on the following website <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/ceccsr-cerceef/egsl-eng.html>.

12. Banc-des-Américains Marine Protected Area

On March 6, 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada created, jointly with the Quebec government, the Banc-des-Américains Marine Protected Area (MPA) in order to ensure the conservation and protection of this marine ecosystem.

Provisions of the Banc-des-Américains Marine Protected Area Regulations apply to licence holders. In order to comply with them, please refer to the clauses that apply to your fishing activities: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2019-50/page-1.html>.

13. Quota Reconciliation

Quota reconciliation provides that any overharvest of a quota in one year, on an Individual Quota regime or in a competitive fishery, will be accounted for in advance of the following fishing season. For example, quota overruns by a licence holder or by a fleet during a fishing management year will be deducted from quotas for the following season on a one-for-one basis. In the month following the end of the fishing season, the Department makes any necessary changes to quotas for the current year based on quota overruns, if applicable.

14. Species at Risk Act

Pursuant to the Species at Risk Act (SARA), no person shall kill, harm, harass, capture, take, possess, collect, buy, sell or trade an individual or any part or derivative of a wildlife species designated as extirpated, endangered or threatened.

At the time this Management Plan is promulgated, the Atlantic species targeted by these measures are the following ones: Spotted wolfish (threatened), Northern wolfish (threatened),

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Leatherback Turtle (endangered), the Striped Bass (St. Lawrence River population) and exceptionally the White Shark (Atlantic population). New species could be added to the SARA within the year.

All by-catches of species identified above must be returned to the water and released in the exact capture location and, if the fish is still alive, with as little harm as possible. The information related to species at risk shall be collected for each fishing trip where such a species at risk shall be collected for each fishing trip where such a species is caught. This information must be entered into the Species at Risk logbook and sent to fisheries and Oceans Canada immediately after the fishing trip.

15. Management measures to minimize the risks of interactions with the North Atlantic Right Whale

Since 2017, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has put in place additional management measures to protect marine mammal including the endangered North Atlantic Right Whale from entanglement in fishing gear and ship strikes. These measures take into account the best available scientific data and can be adapted if necessary to take into account future developments regarding interactions prevention.

The following requirements have been implemented in order to reduce the risk of entanglement of North Atlantic Right Whales:

a. Requirement to report lost and retrieved gear

Lost gear reporting

Lost fishing gear is defined as any active fishing gear previously set by the licence holder and fishing vessel operator which was sought but not found.

The licence holder or fishing vessel operator must report any of their lost fishing gear within 24 hours of returning to port at the end of the fishing trip. Reports of lost gear must be submitted to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) through the FISHING GEAR *Reporting system* available online at <https://internet.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/en/login> or by completing the *Lost fishing gear form* available online at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/reporting> or in Annex of *Conditions of licence*, according to instructions on the form.

Retrieved gear reporting

The licence holder or fishing vessel operator must report the retrieval of any of their own previously reported lost gear within 24 hours of returning to port at the end of the fishing trip. Reports of retrieved gear must be submitted to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) through the *Fishing gear reporting system* available online at <https://internet.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/en/login> or by completing the *Retrieval of previously reported lost fishing gear form* available online at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/reporting> or in Annex of *Conditions of licence*, according to instructions on the form. Retrieval can only occur during the validity period of the *Conditions of licence* and only in relation to the specific type of gear authorized to be used by the *Conditions of licence*.

b. What to do if you observe a North Atlantic right whale

First of all, it is important to maintain a minimum distance of 100 meters from the animal and 200 meters if the whale is accompanied by a calve. Details regarding sightings of live and free-swimming right whales may be provided to DFO at: XMARWhalesightings@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or by phone at 1-844-800-8568. If you observe this species, please send us your contact information and information about the sighting (date, time, geographical position, number of individuals, etc.). If possible, you can also send us photos or videos.

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If you see a right whale entangled in fishing gear, you should not under any circumstances attempt to release it on your own. The behaviour of an entangled individual is unpredictable and dangerous. You should contact "Marine Mammal Emergencies" at 1- 877-722-5346 as soon as possible to share information that will help to organize an appropriate response by experts (time and position of the entangled animal, behavior of the individual, details on the weather and the state of the sea, etc.).

16. Marine mammal interaction reporting

In order to comply with the implementation of the US *Marine Mammals Protection Act* (MMPA) regulations, licence holders must now provide information regarding all interactions with a marine mammal that occur during fishing expeditions including: bycatch, collisions and all sightings of entangled marine mammals. To do this, the Marine Mammal Interaction Form must be completed and submitted by email to DFO.NAT.InteractionsMM-InteractionsMM.NAT.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca within 48 hours after the end of a fishing expedition.

A copy of the form is attached to the *Conditions of licence* and can also be downloaded and submitted online at the following address: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especies/mammals-mammiferes/report-rapport/page01-eng.html>

The information provided on this form will be used by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to estimate levels of accidental mortality and injury to marine mammals. This information will allow DFO to better assess the types of threats that may affect Canada's marine mammals and to develop mitigation strategies.

In addition, if you observe a dead or distressed animal, please contact Marine Mammal Emergencies as soon as possible at 1-877-722-5346. If possible, do not hesitate to take photos or videos that will allow DFO to assess the situation and identify the species.