



**Gulf Nova Scotia Fishermen's Coalition**  
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February 26th, 2024

Alan Dwyer,

Resource management

Antigonish N.S.

Dear Alan,

Over the years the department can clearly see that GNSFC has taken the initiative to help improve and better the 26b North lobster Biomass. Many of the conservation measures in the past were suggested and implemented voluntarily by industry with the GNSFC playing a major part in the push for these measures. For example, with LFA 26b north being one of the first LFAs in gulf NS to increase to 82.5 no one can dispute that our harvesters take pride in looking after the resource on the western coast of Cape Breton.

With the United States moving up in carapace size over the next 4 years from 82.5mm to 86mm by 2027 as much as 10% to 15% live lobsters will not be able to cross into the American markets (according to lobster council of Canada). With buyers needing little reasons to influence or manipulate prices of lobsters sold in LFA 26b north this will yet be another way of them of paying less for a premium product. With LFA 26b north having an 84mm lobster this will allow us to access markets in USA (without having to cull and re-crate the product) until 2027 when USA will finally move up to 86mm. By then we possibly could follow suit if harvesters wanted to do so. With that being said, this is one of the many reasons harvesters of LFA 26b North feel going up in carapace size is not only a need but a must.

With the economical benefits being a big part of harvester's decision, the main reason and push for this proposal is the increase in egg production. With a 20% increase in egg production from 82.5mm to 84mm(Dfo stats) this alone will be a tremendous help to the stock in LFA 26 b north. With the 2023 lobster stock assessment showing LFA 26b north exploiting at a rate of 80%, harvesters feel that although DFO is confident that the stocks are healthy and not in any immediate danger that helping increase the egg production is also a must in ensuring the resource stays healthy for years to come.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> 2024 GNSFC held a special meeting to talk on the very subjects I briefly discussed. One of our members made a motion to increase .5 mm a year for 3 years to a carapace size of 84mm by 2026 (slightly behind USA's goal of 84mm by 2025 but still a step in the right direction). This motion also included removing the hoop size limitation of 6" once at 84mm. Only 45% of the harvesters were present at the meeting (in person or by proxy) so it was decided to have a mail in vote. All associations in LFA 26b North GNSFC, Inverness South Association and NOS had the chance to participate in GNSFC vote with only NOS not accepting the offer. In all we reached out and mailed 104 ballots out of the total 108 LFA 26b north harvesters and got a return of 62.5% of the mailed ballots.

The Hoop size restriction has been in many talks over the years in our meetings. With members asking what actual benefits were we receiving from a hoop size restriction and why were we one of the very few LFA's with a hoop size restriction? The GNSFC conclusion is that the carapace size increase benefits will considerably outweigh the hoop size restriction benefits. No harvester in LFA 26b north wants to take a out a measure that will negatively impact the resource and if we thought for a second it might, we would not even have discussed it. This is no different than when we removed the "window lobster" conservation measure once we achieved the 82.5mm goal. With this trap limitation removed conservation officers will also be relieved of some of the workload with all the ever-changing lobster trap requirements that they must enforce with their regular checks of fishing gear. And with evidence showing that the bigger and larger lobsters live in deeper offshore waters the hoop size restriction is not a primary concern for inshore fishers at the moment.

On February 26<sup>th</sup> 2024 the ballots were read by all GNSFC port Reps, the Return totaling 60% of **all** LFA 26b North harvesters showed a final count of 64 to 1 in favour of the motion proposed. Meaning **59% of all LFA 26b harvesters** are in favour of increasing .5 mm a year for 3 years to a carapace size of 84mm by 2026 and abolishing the hoop size restriction once at 84mm.

The strong return and strong vote in favour shows once more the determination and pride harvesters of LFA 26b north have in the resource and seeing it thrive for generations to come. We understand with the 2024 season fastly approaching that this is a time sensitive issue and truly hope the department will take our proposal seriously and help us achieve our goal for this coming season.

Kind Regards,

Andrew Bourgeois

President GNSFC

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