



## GULF REGION MARINE CONSERVATION TARGETS UPDATE FOR FISHING INDUSTRY

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### Introduction

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) – Gulf Region is pleased to present this inaugural edition of the Marine Conservation Targets update. In our efforts to continue building on the progress made to date with engagement and outreach, and our commitment to improve communications approaches, we offer this report of updates and actions since the fishing industry meetings that were held last winter. This newsletter will be published twice a year (summer and winter editions) and we hope to get feedback from your organizations about content and format. Please let us know what you think and what you would like to see more of and less of in future editions.

*Mireille Chiasson – Regional Manager/ Ocean Management Division/Ecosystem Management Branch*

### Context

- ✓ The Government of Canada is committed to protecting 5% of Canada’s marine and coastal areas by 2017 and 10% by 2020.
- ✓ Marine conservation efforts to date have resulted in just under 1% protection in Canada.
- ✓ Targets apply to Canada as a whole and represent an area the size of the Atlantic Provinces (575,000 km<sup>2</sup>).
- ✓ Progress will be reported at the national level. Targets have not been set on an ocean or a bioregion.

### How will Canada reach its marine conservation targets?

- ✓ Advance work already underway in areas progressing towards establishment including 5 proposed *Oceans Act* Marine Protected Areas.
- ✓ Establish new, large *Oceans Act* Marine Protected Areas in offshore areas.
- ✓ Establish additional *Oceans Act* Marine Protected Areas.
- ✓ Identify existing fisheries closures and establish new kinds of conservation measures such as fisheries closures to protect sensitive sponges and corals.
- ✓ Examine how the *Oceans Act* can be updated to facilitate the designation process for Marine Protected Areas, without sacrificing science, or the public’s opportunity to provide input.

### Marine Protected Areas Network Development for the estuary and gulf of St. Lawrence bioregion

- In July 2015, you were provided the draft Marine Protected Area Network strategy document for your comments. Reviews have been completed, changes made based on your feedback and the final document will be posted online by end of September at the following website: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/reports-rapports-eng.htm>. Thank you for your input, we now have a high level document that can be used to provide guidance during the next phases of the Marine Protected Area Network development and implementation.
- From January to March of 2016, we met with 20 fisheries organizations in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The meetings were designed to get your feedback on the fishing data mapping exercise that was undertaken to support the full analysis required for network design. By this we mean that areas that have importance for economic reasons are highlighted along with the areas that are important for ecological reasons. By undertaking such analysis DFO is better informed about what

### Areas of Interest

- The Shediac Valley Area of Interest website has recently changed to provide the information that the site is being re-evaluated in the context of the Network planning. What this means is that the current configuration is not moving forward at this time, however the site may be considered again, pending final Network design outcomes. <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/aoi/shediac-valley-eng.html>
- The Gulf Region will be looking at two potential new Areas of Interest as part of



design options reduce socio-economic consequences while still providing significant marine conservation opportunities. The meetings were well attended and the feedback was terrific. We will be providing a summary of changes made based on your feedback.

- With the fisheries economic data mapping exercise nearing completion, we now have the important fishing areas layers that can be used with our ecological layers and the initial network design options will be completed by mid-fall. Our next step will be to re-engage with your organizations in a similar time period as last year (tentatively November – March) to present the initial output and receive your feedback on the design options, this process will be used to reach the final design for the network by the end of 2018. We are looking forward to those discussions and it is at these meetings that we will have the long awaited maps of where the areas that warrant some form of protection. It is important to note that the network design is a long term plan and does not mean that all areas will be implemented immediately. Candidate areas will be implemented based on a risk assessment process and will occur over time.

the plan to advance the Marine Conservation Targets for 2020. While undertaking the Marine Protected Area network design options we will be exploring opportunities for sites that can meet the network goals and priorities. We will be engaging industry and interested parties with potential candidate areas in the coming months.

### Sensitive Benthic Areas/Coral and Sponge

- In 2015 the Government of Canada released the **Coral and Sponge Conservation Strategy for Eastern Canada** <http://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/363832.pdf>. DFO is presently carrying out the ecological risk assessment and determining management actions for coral dominated areas of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This work was identified as a priority action of the Gulf of St. Lawrence Integrated Management Plan, released in 2013 [http://www.gc.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/gestion-management/doc/2013\\_12\\_16\\_FINAL\\_ANGLAIS\\_web.pdf](http://www.gc.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/gestion-management/doc/2013_12_16_FINAL_ANGLAIS_web.pdf). There are several areas within the Gulf of St. Lawrence that have a high density of a species known as sea-pens (*Pennatulacea spp*). These species are associated with soft coral and look like an old fashion feather pen (as shown in photo).
- There will be requests for meetings related to management actions required for this initiative to conserve and protect the high density areas of sea pens in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This request is expected to be made in the early fall with a meeting timeframe of this winter.



photo credit: Marilyn Thorne & Claude Savenkoff, DFO

### Other Measures

- Fisheries closures (e.g., scallop buffer zones) are known as Area-Based Management Measures. To have closures count as part of the 5% and 10% targets they must be analyzed against criteria that determine if they provide a biodiversity conservation benefit. In 2016, the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) provided drafted guidance on identifying Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures. From this guidance, DFO is finalizing the criteria for evaluating existing Area-Based Management Measures to determine if they count as Other Effective Area Based Management Measures and thus fill part of the 5% target for 2017. Results of this exercise will be communicated to all interested parties when completed. Timeframe for completion is in the late fall of 2016.

### Contact Information

Phone: 506 851 7780 or e-mail: [Oceans-qlf@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Oceans-qlf@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)