

2023-2024 CONSERVATION HARVESTING PLAN – Atlantic Halibut (4RST)
Gulf Nova Scotia Fixed Gear Fleet –
Less than 13.71 metres

Approved on May 12, 2023

This conservation harvesting plan (CHP) applies to all **Gulf Nova Scotia** fixed gear licence holders fishing Atlantic halibut in Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Divisions 4RST with vessels less than 13.71 metres in overall length from **May 15, 2023 to May 14, 2024**.

When fishing 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. New in 2023:

Hail Out

Commencing in 2023 fishing season, fish harvesters from both Gulf and Quebec Regions will be required to dial a new telephone number when hailing out. The new telephone number **1-833-699-2013 (toll free) or 1-506-431-3223 (satellite phone only)** will need to be used for new hails, modified hails and cancelled hails. This will direct fish harvesters to a call centre and replace the Vessel Hail Out System (Interactive Voice Recognition System – IVR) until further notice.

2. 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:

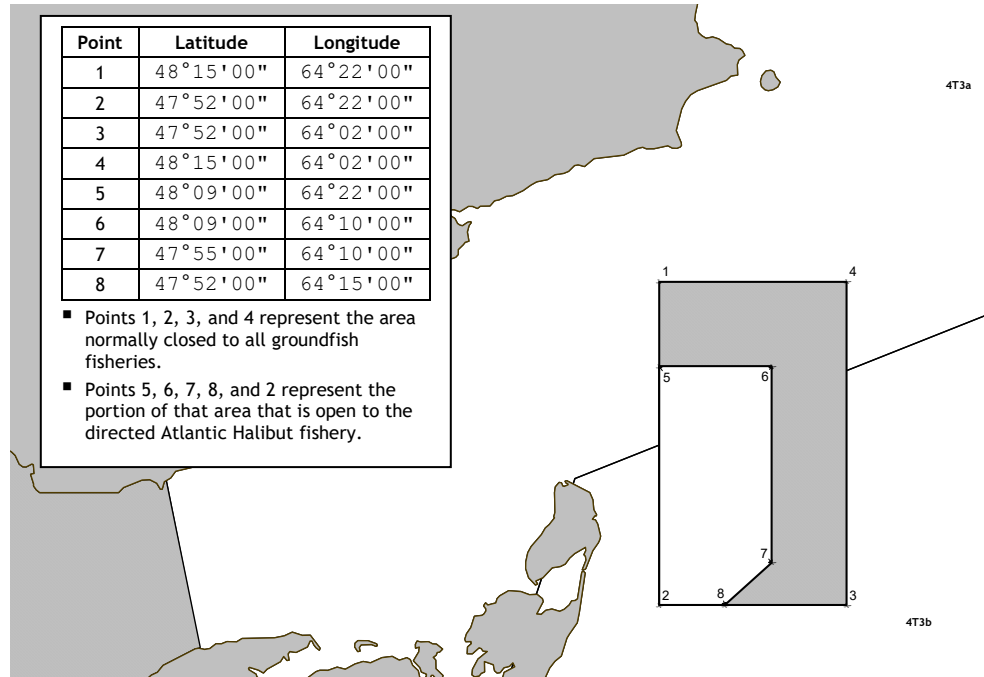
- Closure of all groundfish fisheries from April 1 to June 23 in part of the NAFO Division 4R offshore from St. Georges Bay and Port au Port Bay which is recognized as a spawning area.
- ***Licence holders are advised of the continued temporary closure of part of the 4T division, considering the excessive by-catch of cod previously observed. This area will remain closed until further notice, and is bounded by straight lines delineated by the following points:***
 - 1. 49°02'00" N 64°10'00" W***
 - 2. 48°31'00" N 62°37'00" W***
 - 3. 48°23'00" N 63°08'00" W***
 - 4. 48°46'00" N 64°10'00" W***
 - 5. 49°02'00" N 64°10'00" W***
- Closure by variation order of all groundfish fisheries from January 1 to December 31 in part of groundfish fishing areas 4T3a+b known as Miscou Bank which is a recognized cod concentration area. However, a portion of this area will be open for the directed Atlantic halibut fishery (see map below).
- 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.

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The following map represents the Miscou Bank closure, as well as the portion of that area that is open to the directed Atlantic halibut fishery.

NOTE: When the geographic boundary of an area is expressed in Latitude and Longitude, those point references are based on the geodesic system North American Datum 1983 (NAD83). Positions are expressed in degrees, minutes and seconds.



3. Participants

For the purposes of this CHP, fish harvesters who belong to the **Gulf Nova Scotia** fixed gear fleet are fish harvesters having their homeport in the province of **Nova Scotia** adjacent to NAFO Division 4T, and using vessel class **A-69**.

Replacement vessels or vessel transfers will only be authorized from another fisher whose homeport is in the Gulf Nova Scotia administrative area.

4. Allocation

The total Atlantic halibut allocation for the **Gulf Nova Scotia** fixed gear fleet will be **79.903 metric tonnes** in total for 2023/2024. This consists of an initial allocation of **93.287 t**, plus the quota transfer from 4Vn in the amount of **7.729 t**, minus **21.113 t** that the 2022/2023 allocation was exceeded by. The spring fishery allocation will be a total of **40.263 t** and the summer fishery allocation will be **39.640 t**.

Any overrun of the 2023/2024 allocation will be taken on a one-to-one basis from the 2024/2025 allocation of Atlantic halibut assigned to this fleet.

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	Quota Amount (t)	Spring Fishery (t)	Summer Fishery (t)
28.5 t + 4Vn transfer (7.729 t) 80 / 20 split Spring / Summer	36.229	28.983	7.246
Remaining initial allocation 50-50 split Spring / Summer	64.787	32.393	32.394
Carry-over/ reconciliation	(-21.113)	(-21.113)	
Total	79.903	40.263	39.640

5. Fishing gear

Longline only

Fishery	Minimum hook size	Maximum number of hooks
	Equal to or greater than 15.4 mm	As in accordance with the quantities authorized in the licence.

6. Notification of Presence of North Atlantic Right Whales

6.1 After being given notice of a fishing area closure due to the presence of North Atlantic right whales by one or more of the following methods:

- (a) broadcasting the notice over a commercial or marine radio station, a radio station operated by the Department or a radio station located on a vessel under contract to the Department that broadcasts in the area or in the vicinity of the area affected by the variation;
- (b) transmitting the notice by electronic means to those persons;
- (c) posting the notice on the web site of the Department or of the province;
- (d) having a fishery officer or fishery guardian give oral notice thereof to those persons

The licence holder/operator must:

- i) Closely attend the fishing gears at all time in the affected area (s);
- ii) Remove all the fishing gear from the water as soon as North Atlantic right whales are observed in the vicinity of the fishing gear and when it is safe to do so; and
- iii) Remove all the fishing gear from the water before returning to the Wharf.

6.2 For the purpose of item 6. i) closely attend means the licence holder/operator must stay at the fishing site at all times and be able to remove the fishing gear from the water once a North Atlantic right whale is observed in the vicinity of the fishing gear.

See section 18 for more details regarding North Atlantic Right Whales

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7. 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, Atlantic halibut. If below by-catch limits are exceeded, the fishery may be closed. By-catch of groundfish species **may not be released** unless a condition of licence authorizes to do so. For management purposes, the individual by-catch limits of groundfish while directing for Atlantic halibut are as follows:

Cod	Maximum daily limit 45 kg or 30% , whichever is greater
White hake and American plaice	Maximum daily limit of 10%
Other species of groundfish	25%

8. 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 / 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. Where there is a requirement by condition of licence to release undersized fish to the water, it will not be counted within the small fish protocol. Undersized fish **may not be released** unless a condition of licence authorizes to do so.

9. Logbooks & combined forms

Logbooks are mandatory for all fish harvesters with homeports in the **Gulf Region**. They must be completed each fishing day.

10. Dockside Monitoring

Dockside monitoring program (DMP) will apply for **100%** of landings.

11. Observer Coverage

Industry funded at sea observer coverage:

- Minimum of 10% applies

Fish harvesters are required to contact **1-833-699-2013 (toll free) or 1-506-431-3223 (satellite phone only)**, at least **10 hours before leaving** on each fishing trip (mandatory hail-out).

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12. Catch Monitoring and Test Fishery

In cases where fishing takes place over several days, there could be fishing closures for fleets due to excessive captures of small fish or by-catch. Small fish and by-catch closures will be of a minimum duration of ten days. The cost of conducting all test fisheries must 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 high levels of small fish or incidental catch, the fishery may remain closed for the remainder of the year.

13. Fishing Seasons

The following seasons will be in effect during the current management cycle.

Groundfish fishing areas	Openings
4T1, 4T2(a+b), 4T4, 4T6, 4T8 & 4T9 (a+b)	May 15 to May 14 of the following year.
4T3 (a) and 4T3 (b)	May 15 to May 14 of the following year, except portion of Miscou bank
4T4	May 15 to May 14 of the following year
4T5 and 4T7	No directed fishery

However, the actual opening dates for the **Gulf Nova Scotia** fixed-gear fleet will be as follows:

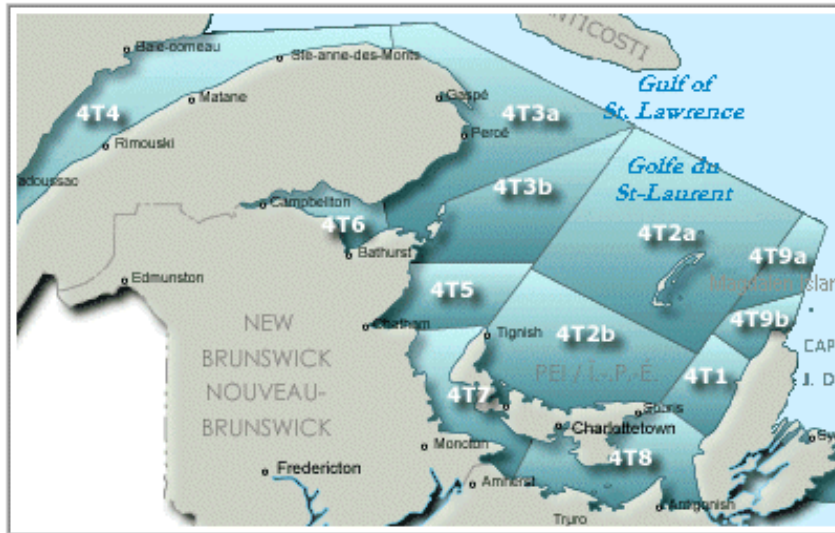
	Dates and time (ADT)	Fishing areas
Spring fishery	Starting on May 18, 2023, at 05:00 hrs and ending on May 19, 2023 at 12:00 hrs	4T1, 4T8, 4T2a, 4T2b, 4T9a and 4T9b

These opening dates may be modified due to weather conditions, quota availability, or other circumstances.

Any unused quota may be made available to this fleet before May 14, 2023, pending approval of an amended CHP.

You can obtain additional information concerning groundfish fishing areas and coordinates on our web site at [Groundfish Fishing Areas \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/groundfish-fishing-areas)

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If, after the prescribed fishing period, the total catch is over 90% of the quota, the objective will be considered to have been reached and the fishery will not reopen. If, after the prescribed period, the 90% threshold has not been harvested, industry and departmental representatives will consider a reduced period of fishing to reach the objective.

14. 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. Quota overruns by a licence holder or by a fleet during a fishing management cycle 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.

15. 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 derivate 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 wolffish (threatened), Northern wolffish (threatened), Leatherback Turtle (endangered), White Shark (Atlantic population) and Atlantic Walrus (Northwest Atlantic population) (extirpated). 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.

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16. 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: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/ceccsr-cerceef/egsl-eng.html>.

A portion of the closure called “Gulf-East” may be situated in 4T9a.

17. Gear Marking

Gear marking is in place in the fishery. Details of these requirements can be found in your licence condition and at the following address:

<https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/commercial-commerciale/atl-arc/colour-notice-avis-couleur-eng.html>

18. Management measures to minimize interactions with North Atlantic Right Whales

The Management measures to minimize interactions with North Atlantic Right Whales (NARW) can be found at the following address:

<http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/commercial-commerciale/atl-arc/narw-bnan/management-gestion-eng.html>.

19. Other Management Measures

The Department will continue to monitor the level of dumping and discarding of groundfish at sea. An industry funded sampling program is already in place to collect data to monitor small fish and by-catch. The sampling program will further be enhanced to include the collection of additional data to monitor discard of groundfish. If a fleet sector or an individual is suspected of dumping and discarding groundfish at sea, the industry funded at-sea observer coverage may be increased up to 100%. The Department will continue to apply quota reconciliation.