

**Terms of Reference**  
**Committee for Setting the Opening Date for the Fishery**  
**Area 12 Snow Crab**

This document describes the terms of reference of the Committee for Setting the Opening Date for the Fishery (i.e. Committee) and the protocol for setting the opening date of the snow crab fishery in Area 12 (12, 18, 25, 26).

**1. Mandate of the Committee**

The Committee has been created because of the need to coordinate the activities associated with the opening of the Area 12 snow crab fishery. The primary mandate of the Committee is to ensure that the opening date can take place in the safest way possible at the wharves and at sea and to insure that the different sectors of the fishery are part of the consultative process. In order to reduce the risk of North Atlantic right whale (NARW) entanglement in fishing gear and maximize fishing opportunities before the implementation of closures for the protection of the NARW, the Committee must aim to open the fishery as early as possible. The Committee is responsible for recommending an opening date to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). DFO will make the final decision and communicate it to the members of the southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence (sGSL) snow crab Advisory Committee.

**2. Membership of the Committee**

- a. The Committee will be composed of Area 12 members of the Snow Crab Advisory Committee, including:
  - Representatives from the traditional midshore fleet
  - Representatives from the traditional inshore fleet
  - Representatives from the New Access fleet
  - Representatives from First Nations
  - Representatives from the processing sector
  - Representatives from DFO
  - Representatives from the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG)
  - Representatives from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
- b. A DFO official will serve as Chair of the Committee, whose duties will include associated logistical functions (i.e., provide information to join the Committee calls and distribute the invitations).
- c. The members of the Committee are responsible for consulting the groups they represent.
- d. DFO is responsible to share information on weather and ice conditions provided by the Ice Service Specialist from Environment Canada to members of the Committee for the teleconferences.

- e. Other resources such as CCG, Fishery Officers, Search and Rescue, Small Craft Harbour (DFO), etc. will be consulted and may be invited to participate in Committee calls as subject matter experts.

### **3. Opening Protocol (to identify a target opening date)**

#### **Preamble:**

The snow crab Fishing Area 12 (18, 25, 26) is considered one fishing area and will have the same season date.

It should be noted that during the period where fishing is authorized, it is the responsibility of the captain to take into account the marine safety notices issued, among others, by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Transport Canada, as well as the standards and best practices in marine safety, and to take all measures to ensure a safe fishery.

#### **The main considerations to trigger the targeted fishery opening date:**

- **The sGSL (including the waters of the Chaleur Bay) is ice free in water depths greater than 36.6 m (20 fathoms); the fishery may open even if some wharves are not entirely free of ice.**
  - **Safety at sea considerations**
- a. Ice condition information to be evaluated:
    - Ice conditions in the sGSL
    - Ice conditions at the wharves designated for snow crab.
    - Ice conditions in the entrances into these wharves.
  - b. Operational Considerations
    - For DFO operational requirements, the opening date will take place a minimum of 5 working days after the announcement of the management plan.
    - In the case where the management plan has been announced and 5 days have elapsed, 2 working days are needed between the consultation with the Committee and the targeted opening date.
    - For Gulf Region operational requirements and for safety at the wharves, there will be a delay between the opening date for the snow crab fishery in area 12 and the lobster fishery.
  - c. Safety at Sea Considerations
    - Search and Rescue (SAR) services will be available for the opening day, including:
      - The helicopter will be available with a stand-by time of 30 minutes.
      - If all ice cutters are not available, large CCG vessels are on stand-by.

- Navigation buoys are in the water or data for virtual buoys is readily available for fishing industry use.
- Weather Conditions:
  - At the latest, 36 hours before the targeted opening date and time, DFO will verify the Environment Canada marine weather forecast (wind, waves, tides).
  - If the Environment Canada forecast at that time indicates that winds could reach 20 knots or more in any of the 3 forecast sectors in the southern Gulf (Gulf-Magdelen, Chaleur-Miscou, Northumberland Strait), DFO will notify the sGSL snow crab Advisory Committee that the fishery will not open.
  - The Committee will be consulted in order to identify a new opening date.
  - Favorable (i.e. less than 20 knots) marine weather must be forecasted for at least 18 hours to allow licence holders/operators sufficient time to sail to the fishing grounds with traps on board and safely return to the designated wharves.

#### **4. Communication**

- Information shared to the Committee will begin in mid-March, including the logistics for the first virtual meeting. A meeting schedule will be prepared and shared with the Committee by DFO in advance.
- DFO will make a decision using the most recent information supporting a safe opening of the fishery and will be responsible for communicating the opening date to members of the sGSL Snow Crab Advisory Committee.

#### **Example of Setting the Opening Date**

For example, if the targeted opening of the fishery is a Friday at 18:00, the following would need to occur:

1. The management plan is announced at the latest by end of day previous Friday (5 working days before the targeted opening date).
2. The Committee has identified by Wednesday the targeted opening date (2 working days before the targeted opening date).
3. By 10:00 am on Thursday, (36 hours before the targeted opening date), DFO has verified the marine forecast. If the revised forecast is of concern, DFO will consult with the Committee. Based on available information, a decision is recommended at the time of the consultations to either proceed with the targeted opening date or recommend a new date and set a new call if required. If there is no consensus, DFO will set the opening date.
4. DFO will immediately advise the members of the sGSL Snow Crab Advisory Committee of the opening date.