



Quebec Region – Fisheries Management

Conservation Harvesting Plan

LOBSTER – AREA 22 – MAGDALEN ISLANDS FLEET SEASON 2020

Approved April 24, 2020

Application

This *Conservation Harvesting Plan* (CHP) for Lobster applies to the licence holders from the Magdalen Islands fleet when fishing lobster in Lobster Fishing Area 22 in 2020.

Fishing area

Subject to any *Variation Order* and based on valid *Conditions of licence*, the authorized fishing area is Lobster Fishing Area 22, a coastal area surrounding the Magdalen Islands.

Fishing closures

Pursuant to the *Atlantic Fishery Regulations, 1985*, lobster fishing is prohibited in the Magdalen Islands lagoons.

Fishing is also prohibited in a sector of the Grande-Entrée channel and in the aquaculture sites under federal lease. The coordinate of these areas are described in the *Conditions of licence*.

Coral and Sponge Conservation Areas in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence

On December 15, 2017, Fisheries and Oceans Canada created eleven coral and sponge conservation areas in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence in order to protect areas with high concentrations of sponges and sea pens.

All fishing activities that use bottom-contact gear or gear designed to come into contact with the sea bed, including but not limited to bottom trawls, dredges, gillnets, bottom longlines, bottom seines and traps, are forbidden in the conservation areas.

For more information and maps of the eleven coral and sponge conservation areas, please visit the dedicated DFO website: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/ceccsr-cerceef/egsl-eng.html>.

Fishing seasons

The fishing season will open on May 9 and will end on July 11, 2020. It represents the maximum duration of fishing period and will be confirmed through *Variation Order*.

Moreover, to encourage the safest possible setting of traps for all lobster fish harvesters, a Weather Condition Monitoring Protocol updated in winter 2014 is in place in order to postpone the setting of traps when, at 15:30 h the day before the opening, the wind forecast is more than 20 knots for the following morning.

It should be reminded that it is the responsibility of the captain to acquaint himself with

the marine safety notices published by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Transport Canada as well as with the standards and best practices in marine safety and to take all measures necessary to insure a safe fishery during the period where fishing is authorized.

Fishing (lifting of traps) is authorized during the period comprised between 5 h and 21:30 h, from Monday to Saturday, with the exception of the last two fishing days of the season when the fishing schedule does not apply. If, for exceptional reasons beyond his or her control, a fish harvester is unable to respect the fishing schedule in effect, he (she) shall contact a DFO Fishery Officer to obtain authorization to deviate from the established schedule for that day.

Fishing (lifting of traps) remains unauthorized on the day the traps are set, as well as on Sundays.

Number of licences

325 licence holders.

Management regime

The fishery is managed by control of the fishing effort.

Fish harvesters are not authorized to haul their traps more than once per day.

Minimum catch size

Under the *Atlantic Fishery Regulations, 1985*, the minimum catch size is 83 mm.

Fishing gear

Number of authorized traps and traps dimensions

Fish harvesters are authorized to use 273 traps with maximum outside dimensions not exceeding:

- 82 cm in length, 61 cm in width and 50 cm in height for rounds traps;
- 82 cm in length, 61 cm in width and 42 cm in height for square traps.

Escape mechanisms

Each trap must be equipped with one rectangular escape vent (minimum 47 mm high by minimum 127 mm long) or two circular escape vents (minimum 65 mm diameter).

Exit panels

Each lobster trap must be equipped with one exit panel compliant with the *1985 Atlantic Fishing Regulations* or with a soft cotton twine.

Tagging

It is prohibited to have on board a fishing vessel an untagged trap. Fish harvesters are authorized to keep on board the fishing vessel two replacement traps, as long as they bear a valid tag. In 2020, the color of original tags is green and the color of replacement tags is orange.

Trap lines (trawl)

Minimum 7 traps per line; maximum 8 fathoms between each trap; and maximum 56 fathoms from the first to the last trap, no matter the number of traps per line.

Buoy identification

Fish harvesters are responsible for ensuring that their commercial fishing vessel registration number (VRN) appears on their buoys at any time.

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

As of 2017, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has put in place additional management measures to protect 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:

Amount of Rope Floating on the Surface of the Water

As of 2018, the following requirements are in place to minimize the length of rope floating on the surface of the water and reduce the risk of North Atlantic Right Whales entanglements:

- A maximum of 3.5 fathoms of rope shall be used when attaching a secondary buoy to a primary buoy.
- At all time, no rope attaching a trap to a primary buoy shall remain floating on the surface of the water after the trap has been set.

Note: A primary buoy is defined as a buoy or other floating device attached to a fishing gear. A secondary buoy is defined as a buoy or other floating device attached to a primary buoy.

Gear marking

Starting 2020, licence holders using fixed gear must mark the rope used to attach a fishing gear to a primary buoy with colours specific to the region, targeted species and fishing area in which they are authorized to fish. This requirement is intended to facilitate the identification of the area where an entanglement has occurred. The following coloured markings are required for the Area 22 lobster fleet:

Fleet	Colours for marking
Lobster, Area 22	Green-yellow

The gear marking consisting of interlacing different colored twine sections within existing rope must be implemented as follows:

- a) The first colour to identify specific Region – to be interlaced on the same segment of rope as the second colour.
- b) The second colour to identify target Species – to be interlaced on the same segment of rope as the first colour.

The above coloured twine markings must be permanently interlaced within the rope. Each coloured twine must be interlaced in the rope on a minimum length of 15 cm. The use of paint or tape is not an admissible alternative to twine.

The minimum requirements regarding the number and position of colour markings are detailed in the *Conditions of licence*.

For more information

All the information on gear marking measures has been published in the January 31th, 2020 *Notice to Fish Harvesters*, available at the following link: https://inter-l01.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/applications/opti-opei/notice-avis-eng.php?region_id=4&sub_type_id=5&type=1&display_option=1.

Additional Identification of Buoys

In addition to the current regulatory requirement to mark buoys with the vessel registration number (VRN), licence holders are required to add a sequential number on each primary buoy in order to be able to individually identify each trawl. This additional requirement will help identify and retrieve lost gear and could also help identify the sector where a NARW may have become entangled.

The sequential number shall be solid block Arabic numerals:

- without ornamentation;
- written in a smaller or bigger font size than the VRN so as to be capable of differentiating the number from the VRN; and
- in a colour that contrasts with the buoy's colour.

Requirement to Report Lost and retrieved Gear

Licence holders must report lost gear to Fisheries and Oceans Canada. This management measure will allow the amount of gear lost annually to be quantified and help identify the need to increase efforts to retrieve gear that has been lost, which would reduce the risk of whale entanglements.

Licence holders must report any lost fishing gear or the retrieval of any of their own previously reported lost gear to Fisheries and Oceans Canada by completing the corresponding section of the Electronic Logbook or by completing and submitting the Lost Fishing Gear form or the Retrieval of Previously Reported Fishing Gear form, available online at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/commercial-commerciale/reporting-declaration-eng.html>. Retrieval of a fishing gear can only occur under a valid fishing licence and only in relation to the fishing gear authorized by the fishing licence.

The appropriate form must be completed and submitted within 24 hours of discovering that gear has been lost or within 24 hours of retrieving gear previously reported as lost. For fishing trips of less than 5 days in length, the appropriate form must be completed and submitted within 24 hours of arriving at port.

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, please send us photos or videos.

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 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.).

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 trips 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 trip.

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 Fisheries and Oceans Canada 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.

Electronic logbook

As of 2019, the use of an electronic logbook (Elog) becomes mandatory for all fishermen. The client application must be approved by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) for the Quebec region for the form ELOG – Logbook - Traps (lobster). Furthermore, the user must have obtained and installed their Elog Key in his client application in order to allow data transmission to DFO.

The Elog must be completed for each fishing expedition and “closed” before landing. A fishing expedition commences at the time a fishing vessel leaves a port to engage in fishing and terminates at the time fish caught are offloaded. Hence, when a fish harvester goes back to port for a reason other than for offloading fish and leaves port again, the fishing expedition goes on until fish are offloaded.

To consult the list of client applications approved by Fisheries and Oceans Canada for the Quebec region and to obtain your Elog key, visit Fisheries and Ocean’s web page at the following address: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/sdc-cps/nir-nei/elog-index-jbe-eng.html>

To request a modification to data that has been transmitted to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, you must communicate with the customer service at 1-877-535-7307.

Incidental catches protocol

Any fish caught incidentally 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.

Lobster fish harvesters are authorized to keep male rock crab incidental catches.

Simultaneous fisheries

The following fisheries are not authorized at the same time as the lobster fishery (same fishing season): lobster and whelk, lobster and rock crab, lobster and toad crab (*hyas sp*). Moreover, fishing lobster and flounder during a same fishing trip is not authorized.

Vessel

Fishing vessels with a length overall less than 15.24 metres (50 feet) may be used.

Other Management measures

Soaking of traps: In order to protect the resource and to reduce the impact on the eel grass, rules are in place with regard to the soaking of traps. DFO will keep authorizing the soaking of completed traps, from March 15 to the opening of the lobster commercial fishery, in tidal waters less than 0.91 meters (3 feet) deep only and outside any dock, fishing harbour or marina. This rule does not engage any other authority that may be concerned by the soaking of lobster traps.

Species at Risk Act

Pursuant to the *Species at Risk Act*, 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 Conservation Harvesting Plan is promulgated, the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence species susceptible to being captured are the following: the Spotted Wolffish, the Northern Wolffish, the Leatherback Turtle and the Striped Bass (St. Lawrence River population). New species could be added during the course of the year.

All incidental captures of species identified above must be immediately returned to the water where they were captured and, if the animal is still alive, in the manner that causes it the least harm. All incidental captures of species at risk must be recorded in the «

Species at Risk » section of the logbook. Furthermore, all interactions with species at risk, notably the North Atlantic Right Whale, the Blue Whale (Atlantic population), the Beluga Whale (St. Lawrence Estuary population) and the White Shark (Atlantic population), must be recorded in this section of the logbook.

These requirements are additional to any obligation to declare an interaction with a marine mammal using the prescribed form (see section Marine mammal interaction reporting).

Licence/Conditions of licence

To obtain their Conditions of licence, licence holders must access the National Online Licensing System. For National Online Licensing System assistance, please contact customer support by phone at 1-877-535-7307, or by email at fishing-peche@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Approved by

Maryse Lemire
Fisheries Management Regional Director
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Quebec

For any questions regarding this CHP

You may call at 418-986-2095.

For additional information

Please visit our website at the following address: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/index-eng.htm>.