

**2023-2024 CONSERVATION HARVESTING PLAN**  
**Atlantic Halibut (4RST) - Prince Edward Island fixed gear fleet**  
**Less than 19.81 meters**

**EKME: 43320009**

APPLICATION

This Conservation Harvesting Plan (CHP) applies to all Prince Edward Island (PEI) fixed gear licence holders fishing Atlantic halibut in NAFO Divisions 4RST with vessels less than 13.1716 meters (45 feet) 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 harvesting plan.

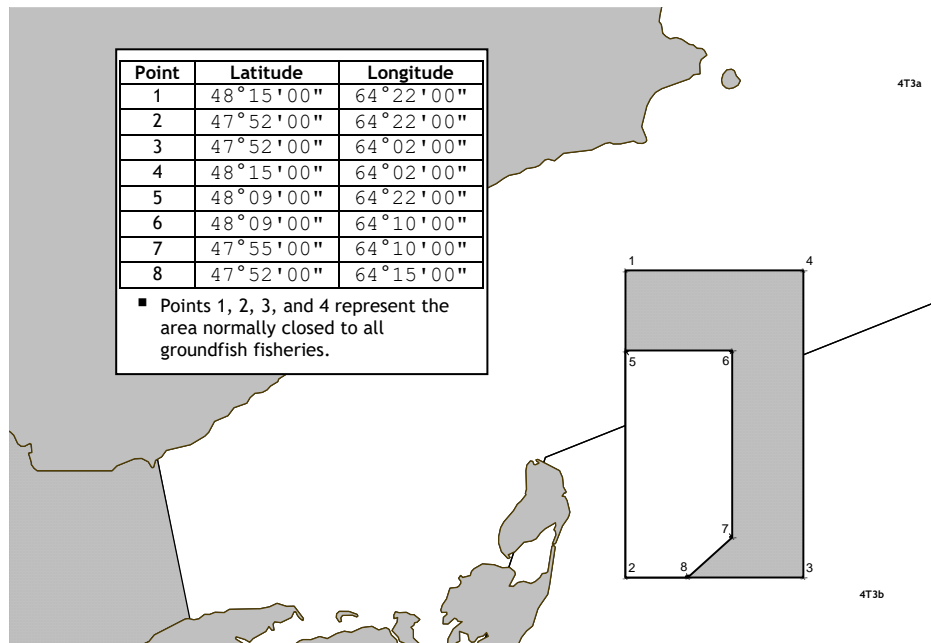
COMMERCIAL FISHERY

**1. 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 industry consider very important for the reconstruction of the cod stock in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The following conservation measures will apply:

- Closure of all groundfish fisheries from April 1, 2023 to June 23, 2023 in part of the NAFO Division 4R offshore from St. Georges Bay and Port au Port Bay.
- Closure by variation order of all groundfish fisheries from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023 in part of groundfish fishing area 4T3 known as Miscou Bank.

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.



**2. Participants**

For the purposes of this Conservation Harvesting Plan, commercial groundfish licence holders

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using longline who belong to the Prince Edward Island fixed gear fleet are fishers having their home port in the province of Prince Edward Island using Vessel Class A-68. To be eligible to participate in this fishery, eligible fishers must register with the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association between June 9, 2023 and June 19, 2023.

Fish harvesters will be required to pay a registration fee of \$250.00 covering the fleet's observer coverage costs as well as fleet improvement activities and/or Atlantic halibut research to be determined by the PEIFA Groundfish Advisory Committee.

In a case where the number of licence holders applying to register is in excess of 400, a meeting of those registered will be organized to discuss participation level and vote on subsequent controls.

### **3. Season Catch Limit**

. A maximum catch limit per licence will be authorized and will be indicated in the licence conditions, following a predetermined formula. When the individual Atlantic halibut catch limit has been reached, fishing gear must be immediately removed from the water. All Atlantic halibut caught over the seasonal catch limit authorized in the licence condition is required to be returned (a) to the place from which it was taken forthwith; and (b) where it is alive, in a manner that causes it the least harm. In accordance with the text from the conditions of licence, any quantity landed in excess of the catch limit will place the harvester in a position of infraction and charges can be laid.

### **4. Allocation**

The Atlantic halibut allocation for the PEI fixed gear fleet will be 86.651 metric tonnes (t) in total for 2023. This corresponds to the initial allocation for this fleet (85.350 t) as well as a carry forward of 1.301 t remaining from the 2022 season.

Given the results of previous years of the fishery since the inception of individual catch limits; and in an effort to achieve the goal of harvesting a minimum of 90% of the quota during the first fishing period and thereby eliminating the reallocation of quota, for the purpose of calculating individual quotas, an additional 75% will be added to the fleets total allowable quota. 151.64 tonnes (86.651 X 1.75) will be divided by the number of registered fishers plus the number of communal commercial licences in order to establish a seasonal catch limit per licence. This does not increase the catchable quota for the fleet beyond 86.651 tonnes.

Transfer of seasonal catch limit between participants is NOT authorized.

### **5. Fishing gear**

#### **➤ Longline only**

- i. Minimum hook size: opening must be equal to or greater than 15.4 mm.
- ii. Maximum number of hooks: 300 hooks.

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**6. 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 fishing period limit of 50 kg
White Hake	Maximum daily limit of 10%
Other species of groundfish	25%

**Special provision regarding cod:** Once a licence holder reaches the by-catch limit of 50kg of cod, all fishing gear shall be immediately removed from the water and fishing shall cease. All cod caught in excess of 50 kg shall be forthwith returned to the water from which it was taken and where it is alive, in a manner that causes it the least harm.

**Harvesters are requested to document every encounter with specific discarded species, as listed in the license conditions, by recording them in the comment section of the Fixed Gear (Groundfish) logbook. The species to be recorded include Winter flounder (blackback) less than 25 cm in length, Atlantic halibut less than 85 cm in length, Skate, Dogfish and Lumpfish.**

**7. Small Fish Protocol**

The following small fish protocol will apply: areas may 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.

a.	Cod	43 cm
b.	American Plaice	30 cm
c.	Witch Flounder	30 cm
d.	White Hake	45 cm
e.	Winter Flounder /Yellowtail Flounder	25 cm
f.	Atlantic Halibut	85 cm
g.	Greenland Halibut	44 cm
h.	Redfish	22 cm

**8. Catch Monitoring and Test Fishery**

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

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during the year because of high levels of small fish or incidental catch, the fishery may remain closed for the remainder of the year.

**9. Logbook**

Logbooks are mandatory for all vessels.

**10. Dockside Monitoring**

Dockside Monitoring Program (DMP) will apply at 100%.

**11. Observer Coverage**

Industry-funded at-sea observer coverage at a minimum of 10% will apply for vessels less than 13.716 meters (45 feet).

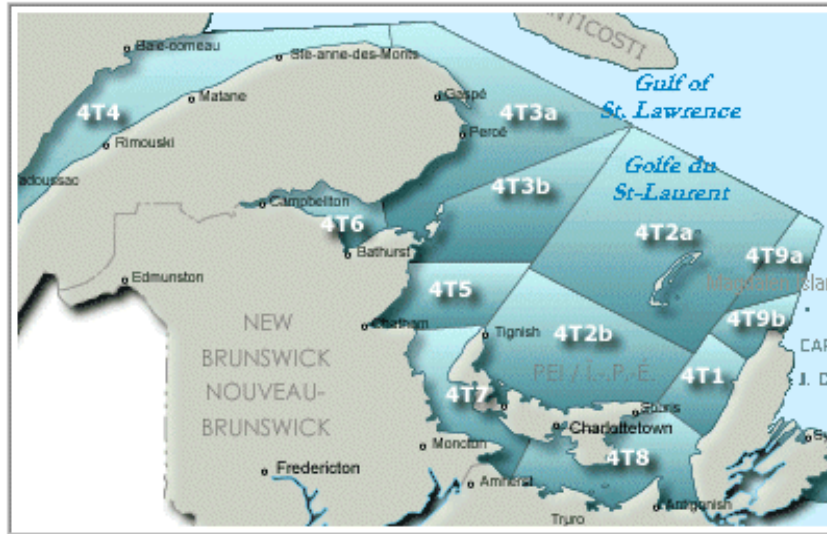
Fishers are required to contact the new DFO Vessel Hail-Out System 1-833-699-2013 (toll-free) and 1-506-431-3223 (satellite phone only), at least **10 hours before leaving** on each fishing trip (mandatory hail-out).

**12. Fishing Seasons/Periods**

The following seasons will be in effect during the year. However, the actual fishing periods for the PEI geographical fleet will be four openings of four days, from Tuesday to Friday for each opening: July 11th to July 14th, July 25th to July 28th, September 12th to September 15th and September 26th to September 29th. During openings the fishery will occur from 4 am until 4 pm the last day of each opening. There will be no weather calls to determine opening and closing. The fishery will open and close via variation order.

- 4T1           ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T2 (a)       ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T2 (b)       ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T3 (a)       ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year, except Miscou bank
- 4T3 (b)       ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year, except Miscou bank
- 4T4           ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T5           ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T6           ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T7           ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T8           ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year
- 4T9 (a+b)     ▪ May 15 to May 14 the following year

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A review of the quota will occur on October 3, 2023. If after that point, the total catch is over 90% of the quota, the objective will be considered to have been reached and the fishery will not reopen. In such a situation DFO Gulf Region will support a request to carry-forward the remaining fleet quota into the 2024 fishing year.

If, after the prescribed period, the 90% threshold has not been harvested, a second fishing period will occur. Eligible commercial licence holders will include active fishers from the first fishing period (those with a hail out AND hail in number). Registration for a draw to redistribute the remaining quota to eligible commercial licence holders will be administered by the PEIFA after October 3, 2023. There will be no fee for the reallocation draw and participants will be included on a rotating list. The remaining PEI quota will be equally distributed with the same individual licence catch limit as the initial fishing period. The number of participants will be determined by the amount of remaining quota. After the second fishing period, if the 90% threshold has not been harvested, a third fishing period will occur. The remaining PEI quota will be equally distributed with the same individual licence catch limit as the initial fishing period. The number of participants will be determined by the amount of quota remaining and the next participants on the rotating list will be contacted to take part. This methodology will continue until the 90% threshold is met. If at any point a fisher participates in the reallocation fishery but does not catch their allotted limit for that time frame, the remaining allocation goes back into the PEI quota to be equally distributed in the following reallocation period. NO EXCEPTIONS for weather, boat breakdowns, etc.

### **13. Night fishing**

While fishing under this CHP, night fishing is allowed. Licence holders must tend their gear if North Atlantic Right Whales are present or an area is closed to fixed gear due to the presence of North Atlantic Right Whales.

### **14. 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.

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**15. Marine Protected Area**

On March 6, 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada implemented the Banc-des-Américains Marine Protected Area (MPA) to protect and conserve its marine ecosystem.

Provisions of the Banc-des-Américains Marine Protected Area Regulations apply to the licence holder/operator. In order to comply with them, please refer to the clauses that apply to your fishing activities. <http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2019/2019-03-06/html/sor-dors50-eng.html>

**16. Protection of marine mammals and North Atlantic Right Whales**

A shift in the distribution of the North Atlantic Right Whales (NARWs) population in recent years has resulted in an increased presence of NARWs in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In an effort to minimize the risks of interactions with this species, other marine mammals and species at risk, DFO is announcing important management changes in the Gulf Region groundfish fishery. The management measures to minimize interactions with NARW can be found at the following link:

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

**17. Gear Marking**

Gear marking is mandatory for the 2023 PEI Halibut fishery. Specific requirements are explained in the Notice to Fish Harvesters that was issued January 31, 2020 and details of these requirements can be found in your licence conditions.

**18. 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 discarding 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%.

Buddy-up arrangements will not be authorized in this fishery.

**19. Quota Reconciliation**

Quota reconciliation provides that any overharvest of a quota in one year will be accounted for in advance of the following fishing season. For example, quota overruns by a fleet during the current season 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 will make any necessary changes to quotas for the current year based on quota overruns, if applicable.

**20. 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) and Atlantic walrus (Northwest Atlantic population) (extirpated). New species could be added to the SARA within the year.

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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 is caught. This information must be entered into the logbook and reported to Fisheries and Oceans Canada immediately after the fishing trip.

**COMMERCIAL COMMUNAL FISHERY**

Whereas, 'Government of Canada in carrying out its activities, will respect potential or established Aboriginal or Treaty rights of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people' by consulting with Aboriginal groups<sup>1</sup>,

Whereas, aboriginal organizations seek to develop economically viable commercial fisheries enterprises, improved governance and capacity building in commercial fisheries operations; and desire a more effective voice in fisheries co-management, and

Whereas, DFO encourages aboriginal organizations to, 'build their capacity to manage successful commercial fishing enterprises and participate in the co-management of the integrated commercial fisheries along with other commercial harvesters'<sup>2</sup>.

This section therefore sets out those provisions specific to all commercial fishing activities carried out under the '*Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licences Regulations*', in particular that all fishing will be operated in accordance with the provision of Sections 1 to 16 outlined in this CHP, except as otherwise indicated in this section.

**SPECIFIC EXEMPTIONS**

Two weeks prior to the opening of the fishery, Communal Commercial licence holders will provide notice of which licences they will be using during the fishery and designation lists to Fisheries and Oceans. These licence holders will be granted access to the fishery without the requirement to register with the PEIFA.

If reallocation of quota is necessary, communal commercial licence holders will notify Fisheries and Oceans which of the eligible licences (those with a hail out AND hail in number) they will use. The Department will assign individual catch limits to those licences prior to determining the number of commercial participants.

Given the ability of Indigenous groups to designate more than one licence to the same fisher, and the fact that each of these licences can be fished independently, more than one individual catch limit may be landed per trip. However, for the purpose of this fishery, a vessel will be restricted to gear amounts of one licence.

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1 Aboriginal Consultation and Accommodation, 'Updated Guidelines for Federal Officials to fulfill the Duty to Consult'

2 Evaluation of the Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (AICFI)