



Gulf Region

Notice to Fish Harvesters

2026 - SOUTHERN GULF OF ST-LAWRENCE LOBSTER CONSERVATION HARVESTING PLAN FOR LOBSTER FISHING AREAS (LFAs) 23, 24, 26A AND 26B

Moncton, NB – March 30, 2026 - Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Gulf Region, announces the 2026 management measures for Lobster Fishing Areas (LFA) 23, 24, 26A and 26B. Unless indicated otherwise, existing management measures remain in place. Please refer to your lobster licence conditions for further details. Licence conditions should be available on the National Online Licensing System by April 1, 2026.

Management measures and the season dates for **LFA 25** will be announced at a later date.

Opening Dates in 2026

Please see the 2026 targeted season dates below:

Lobster Fishing Area	Season opening dates in 2026
23	April 30 - June 30
24	April 25 - June 25
26 A-1	April 27 - June 27
26 A-2	April 27 - June 27
26 A-3	April 20 - June 20
26 B (South)	April 30 - June 30
26 B (North)	May 2 - July 2

The LFA season will open at 6 a.m. on the dates indicated in the table above, except in LFA 26 A-3 where the season will open at 6:30 a.m. Season dates are subject to change due to weather, ice, dredging activities or other conditions. In the event of inclement weather, in accordance with departmental directives, the season opening may be delayed, with a corresponding extension of up to four days (a one-day extension for each day of delay, up to a maximum of four days), at the industry's request. In LFA 23, there is also flexibility allowing for an opening up to 72 hours prior to the scheduled season opening.

DFO will monitor and assess the situation at the various wharves a few weeks before the scheduled openings. Conference calls will be held in the days leading up to the scheduled opening between DFO and stakeholders to obtain feedback on the situation at various locations in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Mandatory Electronic Logbook

The use of an electronic logbook (ELOG) is mandatory for commercial and commercial communal harvesters fishing lobster in Lobster Fishing Areas 23, 24, 25 and 26. The use of paper logbooks is no longer accepted.

Changes to Reporting of Lost / Retrieved Fishing Gear

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is advising fish harvesters of changes in the conditions of licences related to lost and retrieved fishing gear. Please consult the [2026 - Conditions of Licence: Changes to Reporting of Lost / Retrieved Fishing Gear](#) for additional information.

LFA 23D - Change in the minimum legal carapace size and dockside monitoring.

As announced in 2025, the minimum legal carapace size has been reduced from 81 mm to 79 mm, starting in 2025, in LFA 23D only. This temporary measure will remain in effect for a period of three years. A pilot project has been implemented for this same period to monitor a portion of lobster landings and will be subject to dockside monitoring.

Management measures to minimize interactions with North Atlantic Right Whales

The 2026 fisheries management measures to protect NARW are posted online at the following link: [Fishery notices related to North Atlantic right whales.](#)

Table 1: Management Measures in 2026 in Lobster Fishing Areas 23, 24, 26A and 26B

Lobster Fishing Area	Minimum legal carapace size (mm) ¹	Window size for females (mm) ²	Maximum number of traps	Minimum number of traps per line ³	Maximum hoop size (mm)	Minimum size (mm) of escape mechanism
23A	81	115-129	300	n/a	152	46 x 127 ⁵
23B	81	115-129	300	n/a	152	46 x 127 ⁵
23C	81	115-129	300	In a portion of 23C: 3 traps	152	46 x 127 ⁵
23D	79*	115-129	300	In a portion of 23D: 3 traps	152	44 x 127 or 43 x 254
24	75	115-129	300	6 traps	n/a	43 x 127 or 42 x 254
26A-1	76	115-129	272 PEI 280 Gulf NS	In a portion of 26A-1 adjacent to PEI: 6 traps 26A-1 (Gulf NS fishers only): 5 traps	n/a	43 x 127 or 42 x 254
26A-2	78	115-129	255 and 275 ⁴	6 traps	n/a	44 x 127 or 43 x 254
26A-3	81	115-129	250	2 traps	n/a	46 x 127 ⁵
26B South	82.5	n/a	250	n/a	n/a	47 x 127 ⁵

26B North ⁵	84	n/a	250	5 traps	n/a	48 x 127 ⁵
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Notes:

¹As defined by licence conditions (female Lobster of a length of 115 mm but not more than 129 mm shall be returned to the water immediately in a manner that causes it the least harm).

²As defined by licence conditions.

³Commercial licence holders: 255 traps/Some Communal Commercial licence holders: 275 traps.

⁴Closure to fishing in the waters of Cheticamp Harbour.

*Temporary measure with a return to 81 mm after a 3-year period, in 2028.

⁵Please note that only the minimum height of the escape mechanism will be specified (Table 1) from now on if it remains consistent regardless of length of the mechanism. As an example, a height of 46 mm X 127 mm will only be specified, even if this 46 mm height applies to lengths greater than 254 mm.

Bait

Since 2024, the minimum carapace size of rock crab that is permitted to be used as bait in LFA 26 A (including A-1, A-2, and A-3) is **108 mm**.

New in 2026

A new management measure coming into effect this year allows European Green Crab incidentally captured in lobster traps to be used as bait, subject to certain conditions. This management measure is intended to support control efforts and limit the spread of this invasive species through fishing activities. Please refer to your lobster licence conditions for further details.

Restrictions on the reissuance of lobster licenses

For information on restrictions on the movement of lobster licences, please refer to the Commercial Fisheries Licensing Policy for the Gulf Region that can be found at the following link: <http://www.glf.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Gulf/Licenses-Delivery/Commercial-Fisheries-Licensing-Policy>.

Daily closed time

The daily close time is from 9:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. in LFA 23.

*Please note that the daily close time may vary at some wharves. Please refer to your licence conditions.

Transit Corridors

The transit corridors remain in effect, and a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is required (every 5 minutes) if using the transit corridor. The corridor allows fish harvesters to transport their catches through that area to reach their homeport avoiding the use of the smack boat. For this reason, a validity period is added to LFA 23D licences conditions from the date of issuance to June 30. The opening and closing of the season will remain as indicated in the Fisheries Regulations or as announced in a Variation Order. The coordinates for the corridor are identified in the Variation Order and the licence conditions of those using the corridor.

Before you go fishing

The Department has assembled a list of requirements and documents harvesters will need before they start fishing. This list is available at: [Before you start fishing, you will need... \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Before-you-start-fishing-you-will-need...).

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