
Notice to Fish Harvesters

2026 - EXPERIMENTAL STRIPED BASS (MORONE SAXATILIS) BYCATCH PILOT PROJECT IN THE GULF REGION LOBSTER FISHING AREAS (LFA) 23, 24, 25, 26A AND 26B

Moncton, NB – April 24, 2026 – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Gulf Region, is seeking participation in an experimental pilot project allowing striped bass bycatch retention in LFAs 23, 24, 25, 26A, and 26B in 2026. This initiative will enable the department to collect a wider range of data on the prevalence, distribution, condition, and composition of striped bass bycatch in lobster fisheries.

OBJECTIVE

To better understand and quantify the incidence, distribution, condition, and composition of striped bass bycatch in lobster traps in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. This could inform decisions to modify management measures in the future regarding the retention of striped bass. Data quality, consistency, and reliability will be important to providing valuable information for future decision-making.

APPROACH

General

An experimental licence, pursuant to Section 52 of the Fishery General Regulations, issued to each participant, may allow for the retention of striped bass caught incidentally in lobster traps. Participation in the pilot project will be **limited to a maximum of 25 percent** of the total number of active licence holders within each LFA (or sub-LFA).

The pilot project is set to begin on the season opening day specific to each LFA, or at the earliest possible date after the season opening, given logistic considerations, and will conclude at the end of the fishing season.

The information gathered throughout this pilot project will undergo a comprehensive evaluation after the fishing season

Management measures for the pilot project

- All striped bass retained as part of this experimental pilot project must measure between 50 and 65 cm.
- A maximum of four (4) striped bass can be onboard the vessel at all times.
- Any striped bass caught incidentally outside these requirements must be returned forthwith to the water.
- Striped bass caught, within the possession and size limits, as part of this experimental pilot project can be used as bait.
- Sale and gifting of retained striped bass is not permitted.

- Participants must log daily trips and record data on all incidental catches of striped bass in their lobster traps using the pilot project experimental logsheets. NIL reports, indicating zero fish caught, must be submitted.
- Logsheets must be returned to DFO within seven calendar days following the conclusion of their respective fishing season.

How to participate

Fish harvesters can apply to the pilot project via NOLS on a first-come, first-serve basis. The project will be limited to the first 25% of active lobster harvesters per LFA or sub-LFA who submit their application.

NOLS submission instructions

Once in NOLS, applicants will have to select the following request type “*Application for New Licence*” and subtype “*Other*”. In the Comments section of the request, please insert the following text:

- Striped bass bycatch pilot project

For instructions on “*Submitting a Request and Checking the Request Status Step-by-Step*” please refer to this link:

<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/sdc-cps/products-produits/request-demande-eng.html>

Once applications are reviewed, successful applicants will receive their experimental licence, pursuant to Section 52 of the Fishery General Regulations and the associated logbook via NOLS.

Participating fish harvesters will be able to locate their experimental licence in their NOLS’ account document section; the document will appear as Lobster; Scientific. Fish harvesters will be required to print this licence and keep it aboard their vessel while participating in the pilot project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Rachel Friolet
Resource Management, **Eastern NB**
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Tracadie, NB
506-395-7705

Chris Mills
Resource Management, **PEI**
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Charlottetown, PEI
902-940-1437

Alan Dwyer
Resource Management, **Gulf NS**
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Antigonish, NS
902-318-1460

Mathieu Vienneau
Resource Management, **Gulf Region**
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Moncton, NB
506-875-5283