



Notice to Fish Harvesters

2025 FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES IN CANADIAN WATERS

March 20, 2025 – This Notice to Fish Harvesters provides information on the 2025 fisheries management measures to protect North Atlantic Right Whale (NARW).

The management measures will take effect as soon as the Gulf of St. Lawrence snow crab fishery opens in Area 12. In other areas where fall/winter fisheries are in progress, measures apply if NARW are detected and where non-tended, fixed gear fisheries and trap/pot fisheries are operating.

The 2025 NARW management measures for waters deeper than the 20 fathom management line remain unchanged from 2024.

For 2025, the *shallow water protocol* has been updated based on input from harvesters and whale experts. These changes will result in shallow water prohibitions that are more targeted and are of shorter duration, following a confirmed visual or acoustic NARW detection.

1. The fathom lines have been redrawn to more accurately reflect more recent depth data, with new 5 and 15 fathom lines added to allow for more targeted shallow water prohibitions around confirmed NARW detections.
2. Fishing prohibitions triggered by NARW detection in waters shallower than the 20 fathom management line will have a prohibition period of 7 days instead of 15 days. This fishing prohibition may be extended by 7 days if a detection occurs during the initial 7 day closure period.
3. In dynamic zones, DFO is introducing an optional whalesafe gear pilot where participating harvesters will be authorized to continue fishing using gear modifications that reduce the risk of entanglement impact during the prohibition period in shallow waters only. Harvesters who do not participate in the pilot will be required to remove fishing gear from prohibited areas in accordance with the *shallow water protocol*.
4. The Department reserves the right to adjust the size of fishing prohibitions in shallow water areas in specific cases.

It is important to note that these management lines may not align precisely with the actual depth measurements found on various maps and charts. They are intentionally generalized to minimize vertices and complexity in order to implement fisheries management measures for the protection of the North Atlantic right whales.

In the event the industry proposes changes to specific position of the 5, 10, 15, and 20 fathom management lines, the Department will evaluate proposals on a case-by-case basis, provided there is sufficient evidence. Where appropriate, the Department will conduct a full analysis of the area based on the latest Canadian hydrographic bathymetry data and expert advice at its

discretion. If the Department confirms that an adjustment to the management lines is appropriate, the Department will implement the necessary changes.

For more details on the updated *shallow water protocol*, refer to Annex 3.

Industry members have requested that NARW fishing prohibition coordinates be made available in a downloadable format for direct input into GPS plotters. To minimize the risk of manual entry errors, each Notice to Fish Harvesters will now include a downloadable GPX file with the required coordinates.

To improve flexibility for the 2025 season, DFO is also introducing an updated NARW fall surveillance protocol to allow alternative flight options when standard clearance flights cannot be completed as scheduled. The priority is to ensure sufficient surveillance and precautionary measures to protect NARW and ensure the safe operation of fisheries. Events where standard clearance flights are not possible will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Potential measures include permitting a single clearance flight instead of two, considering flights conducted outside the usual timeframe, alternative surveillance options if available, or, in exceptional cases evaluating whether a fishing prohibition can be revoked without a clearance flight, with the consideration of additional precautionary measures. These changes aim to minimize unnecessary delays while maintaining NARW protection measures.

Temporary and season-long prohibited fishing in dynamic management areas in 2025

If a NARW is visually or acoustically detected in areas subject to NARW management measures and in waters deeper than the 20 fathom management line, a defined area around the detection position will be prohibited to non-tended fixed gear, trap and pot fisheries for 15 days.

As in 2024, a NARW visual or acoustic detection that occurs during days 1 to 8 of the 15 day prohibited fishing period of a grid will not trigger an extended fishing prohibition. NARW must be visually or acoustically detected again during days 9 to 15 of a prohibited fishing period in order for the fishing prohibition to be extended.

- In the Bay of Fundy dynamic area and Roseway Basin Critical Habitat dynamic area, if a NARW is detected again during days 9 to 15 of a temporary fishing prohibition area, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grid will be extended for an additional 15 days.
- In the Gulf of St. Lawrence dynamic area, if a NARW is detected again during days 9 to 15 of a temporary fishing prohibition area, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grid will become seasonal until November 15, 2025.
- If no NARW is detected during days 9 to 15 of a temporary fishing prohibition period, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grids will be revoked after day 15. Two clearance flights with no NARW detections are required before a prohibited fishing area can be revoked.

Refer to Annex 1 for additional details on how the *temporary fishing prohibition protocol* applies to the Bay of Fundy dynamic area / Roseway Basin Critical Habitat area, and refer to Annex 2 for

additional details on how the *temporary fishing prohibition* and *seasonal fishing prohibition protocols* apply to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

In waters outside of the dynamic and critical habitat areas

In waters outside of the dynamic and critical habitat areas (meaning outside of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Bay of Fundy and critical habitat area of Roseway Basin), fishing prohibitions will continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Special consideration will be given for detections of three or more NARW, or a mother and calf pair.

Shallow water protocol lines

Provisions for the new 5, 10, 15 and 20 fathom *shallow water protocol* lines will apply as described above. Details of the *shallow water protocol* are provided in Annex 3.

Pre-season surveillance

Pre-season surveillance flights will be considered in fishing areas where existing prohibitions pose a significant impact to major upcoming fisheries. The specific fishing areas subject to these measures will be determined during the fishing season. If surveillance flights are required to lift a prohibited area that would impact the fishery's opening or ability to operate, the Atlantic Marine Mammal Hub will request clearance flights over the affected area from the National Marine Mammal Platform Coordinator. Flight pattern might differ from standard grid clearance flights. For upcoming affected fisheries, these flights will occur in the weeks leading up to the opening. If a NARW is not detected, temporary and/or seasonal prohibitions in the area may be lifted to ensure the full area of the fishery can open on time. If a NARW is detected again, the prohibition protocols will persist.

Prior to the opening of snow crab Area 12 in the Gulf St. Lawrence, Conservation and Protection will conduct a clearance flight to ensure no NARW are present. If a NARW is detected, management measures will be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

Other continued measures related to the protection of NARW in Canada for 2025

DFO will also continue its comprehensive efforts from previous years, such as:

- continuing surveillance efforts on the water, under water and in the air to detect whales, and maintaining science survey efforts to improve knowledge on NARW distribution in Canadian waters, as well as prey availability and factors affecting it;
- continuing to monitor vessel locations and movement to ensure compliance with the measures;
- maintaining gear marking requirements for all non-tended fixed gear fisheries and trap fisheries (such as lobster, crab and other species) are operating;
- maintaining mandatory reporting for lost gear and interactions with marine mammals;
- supporting industry trials of innovative fishing technologies, including authorizing the use of ropeless or on-demand gear in prohibited fishing areas, and other methods to prevent and/or mitigate whale entanglement;
- holding meetings with the NARW Technical Working Group throughout the year;

- holding the annual NARW Advisory Committee meeting with stakeholders each November to help inform the fisheries management measures for the following season.

2025 NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE MANAGEMENT MEASURES
 MEASURES DE GESTION DE LA BALEINE NOIRSE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD 2025



The above map has no legal bearing and is provided for visual reference only.

For Additional Information

Regular updates and detection maps will be posted at the following address:
<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/mammals-mammiferes/narightwhale-baleinenoirean/alert-alerte/index-eng.html>

**ANNEX 1 - BAY OF FUNDY AND ROSEWAY BASIN CRITICAL HABITAT
2025 TEMPORARY FISHING PROHIBITION PROTOCOL
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT NARW**

The Bay of Fundy dynamic area and the Roseway Basin critical habitat area are subject to the *temporary fishing prohibition protocol*.

A *temporary fishing prohibition* is triggered when one or more NARW are confirmed by either visual or acoustic detection in the Bay of Fundy dynamic area and/or in the Roseway Basin critical habitat area. In waters deeper than 20 fathoms, the *temporary fishing prohibitions* are in force for a minimum period of 15 days from the date of the NARW detection, including the gear removal period.

Licence holders are provided an advanced notice of a minimum of 48 hours to remove their fishing gear from the prohibited fishing grids. Harvesters will not be permitted to set gear in the water after the notice is issued and are asked to voluntarily slow down when retrieving gear in the prohibited areas.

In the Bay of Fundy dynamic area and Roseway Basin critical habitat area:

- a NARW visual or acoustic detection that occurs during days 1 to 8 of the 15 day *temporary fishing prohibition* period will not trigger an extended fishing prohibition.
- if a NARW is detected again during days 9 to 15 of a *temporary fishing prohibition* period, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grid will be extended for an additional 15 days;
- if no NARW is detected during days 9 to 15 of a *temporary fishing prohibition* period, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grid will be revoked after day 15. However, two grid clearance flights with no NARW detections continue to be required before a prohibited fishing area can be revoked. If clearance flights are unable to be conducted during days 9 to 15 (e.g. due to poor weather conditions for example), the area will remain prohibited until two flights can safely take place. If a NARW is detected after day 15, this will start a new *temporary fishing prohibition protocol*.

The *temporary fishing prohibition protocol* is implemented using the same fishing grid system as in the past. The defined prohibited fishing area includes the immediate grid of the detection, plus up to eight of the surrounding grids that are within the Bay of Fundy dynamic or Roseway Basin critical habitat areas.

The *shallow water protocol* (SWP) continues to apply to the *temporary fishing prohibition protocol* (details of the SWP are provided in Annex 3).

NARW related management measures apply to all non-tended fixed gear fisheries, trap and pot fisheries (such as lobster, crab and other species).

ANNEX 2 - GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE
2025 TEMPORARY AND SEASONAL FISHING PROHIBITION PROTOCOLS
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT NARW

The Gulf of St. Lawrence dynamic area is subject to the *temporary* and *seasonal fishing prohibition protocols*. The *temporary fishing prohibition protocol* comes into force before the *seasonal fishing prohibition protocol*.

A *temporary fishing prohibition* is triggered when one or more NARW are confirmed by either visual or acoustic detection in the Gulf of St. Lawrence dynamic area. In waters deeper than 20 fathoms, the *temporary fishing prohibitions* are in force for a minimum period of 15 days from the date of the NARW detection, including the gear removal period.

Licence holders are provided an advanced notice of a minimum of 48 hours to remove their fishing gear from the prohibited fishing grids. Harvesters will not be permitted to set gear in the water after the notice is issued and are asked to voluntarily slow down when retrieving gear in the prohibited areas.

In the Gulf of St. Lawrence dynamic area:

- a NARW visual or acoustic detection that occurs during days 1 to 8 of the 15 day temporary fishing prohibition period will not trigger a seasonal fishing prohibition.
- if a NARW is detected again during days 9 to 15 of a temporary fishing prohibition period, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grid will become seasonal until November 15, 2025.
- if no NARW is detected during days 9 to 15 of a temporary fishing prohibition period, the fishing prohibition for each applicable grids will be revoked after day 15. However, two grid clearance flights with no NARW detections continue to be required before a prohibited fishing area can be revoked. If clearance flights are unable to be conducted during days 9 to 15 (e.g. due to poor weather conditions for example), the area will remain prohibited until two flights can safely take place. If a NARW is detected after day 15, this will start a new temporary fishing prohibition protocol.

Fishing prohibition protocols (temporary and seasonal) are implemented using the same fishing grid system as in the past. The defined prohibited fishing area includes the immediate grid of the detection, plus up to eight of the surrounding grids that are within the dynamic or critical habitat areas.

The *shallow water protocol* (SWP) continues to apply to the *temporary fishing prohibition protocol* (details of the SWP are provided in Annex 3). The *seasonal fishing prohibition protocol* continues to be implemented in waters deeper than the 20 fathom shallow water protocol management line only.

NARW related management measures apply to all non-tended fixed gear fisheries, trap and pot fisheries (such as lobster, crab and other species).

ANNEX 3 – SHALLOW WATER PROTOCOL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT NARW

The provisions for the 5, 10, 15, and 20 fathom *shallow water protocol* management lines apply to the dynamic areas and outside dynamic areas in Atlantic Canadian waters.

When there is a confirmed NARW detection in waters deeper than the 20 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line in dynamic zones, the extent of the nine grid prohibition is limited to waters deeper than the 20 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line.

A *temporary fishing prohibition* protocol is triggered in shallow waters in dynamic zones when a single NARW is confirmed by either visual or acoustic detection. Exclusive to shallow waters only, the *temporary fishing prohibitions* are in force for a period of 7 days from the date of the NARW detection, including the gear removal period. Temporary fishing prohibitions of 7 days in shallow waters outside the dynamic zones are only considered on a case-by-case basis. Special consideration will be given for detections of three or more NARW, or a mother and calf pair.

If a subsequent NARW visual or acoustic detection occurs in shallow waters during the 7 day prohibition, the existing fishing prohibition will be extended for an additional 7 days in the affected shallow water grids, starting from the date of the new detection. If no NARW is detected in shallow waters during the 7 days of a temporary fishing prohibition period, the fishing prohibition for each affected shallow water grid will be revoked after day 7. The Department will aim to conduct at least one clearance flight before the end of the 7 day prohibition. If a clearance flight cannot be conducted within the 7 day prohibition period, the fishing prohibition in shallow waters will still be revoked after day 7.

The *temporary fishing prohibition protocol* is only implemented in waters less than the 5, 10, 15, and 20 fathom shallow water protocol management lines in the following circumstances:

- if there is a confirmed detection in waters shallower than the 20 fathom but deeper than the 15 fathom *shallow water protocol* management lines, the extent of the prohibition is limited to waters deeper than the 15 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line only. Fish harvesters are allowed to continue to fish in waters shallower than the 15 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line.
- if there is a confirmed detection in waters shallower than the 15 fathom but deeper than the 10 fathom *shallow water protocol* management lines, the extent of the prohibition is limited to waters deeper than the 10 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line only. Fish harvesters are allowed to continue to fish in waters shallower than the 10 fathom *shallow water protocol* line.
- if there is a confirmed detection in waters shallower than the 10 fathom but deeper than the 5 fathom *shallow water protocol* management lines, the extent of the prohibition is limited to waters deeper than the 5 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line only. Fish harvesters

are allowed to continue to fish in waters shallower than the 5 fathom *shallow water protocol* line.

- if there is a confirmed detection in waters shallower than the 5 fathom *shallow water protocol* management line, the prohibition extends to the shoreline.

The Department will exercise discretion for shallow water prohibitions to adjust the size of prohibitions in specific cases, such as preventing restrictions on both sides of an island.

In 2025, DFO is introducing a pilot whalesafe option that will authorize eligible harvesters to continue fishing during *temporary fishing prohibitions* triggered by single NARW detections in shallow waters only in the dynamic zones, if they meet specific gear requirements. These include: 1) using a maximum of one buoy line per set of traps, with each set containing at least five traps, and 2) incorporating a lower breaking strength modifications in all remaining buoy lines. If three or more NARW or a mother-calf pair are detected in shallow waters, a *temporary fishing prohibition* is enforced for a minimum of 7 days for all harvesters (both pilot and non-pilot harvesters).