

March 20 2025

Supplemental Information for Fish Harvesters:

North Atlantic right whale Shallow Water Protocol Changes for 2025

The Shallow Water Protocol applies to all non-tended fixed gear, trap and pot fisheries, including crab and lobster, conducted in all eastern Canadian waters shallower than the 20 fathom management lines (see map below).

In 2025, following extensive stakeholder feedback, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is making some adjustments to the Shallow Water Protocol. These changes are informed by engagement with harvesters and whale experts. These changes aim to maintain North Atlantic right whale (NARW) protection while minimizing inshore fishing activity disruptions.

Changes to Fishing Prohibition Triggers in Shallow Waters:

- Going forward, shallow water areas are divided by the following management lines: **5, 10, 15, and 20 fathoms**. Fishing prohibitions will be implemented following confirmed NARW detections between shallow water management lines to provide harvesters with more options to move their gear as compared to previous years.
- 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.
- If a NARW is detected visually or acoustically in waters shallower than the 20 fathom management line, the surrounding fishing areas to the next shallow water management line will temporarily close.
 - The fishing prohibition area (number of grid boxes) will be determined at the Department's discretion and will not exceed 9 grid boxes.
 - Areas in shallow waters (less than 20 fathom management line) will close for 7 days starting from the day of the detection and will include the gear removal period (minimum 48 hours, or longer, depending on weather conditions).
- The fishing prohibition in shallow water areas would be extended by 7 days if NARW are re-detected visually or acoustically in the same area during the initial fishing prohibition period. The 7 day extension would commence on the date of the additional detection.

- Fishing prohibition areas in shallow waters will reopen after 7 days if there are no additional right whale detections. The Department will aim to conduct at least one pre-clearance flight to detect the presence of NARW before the end of the 7 day fishing prohibition period. The Department will not require pre-clearance flights to occur prior to proceeding with reopening.
- If there is a detection of three or more NARW or a mother and calf pair, a full fishing prohibition will be implemented where no fishing in the implicated area would be permitted for both pilot and non-pilot harvesters (see details below). Fishing prohibition length and duration will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Whalesafe Pilot Option for Harvesters in Shallow Waters:

In 2025, DFO is providing an option to all inshore trap and pot harvesters fishing within dynamic zones to participate in a voluntary pilot project which includes the adoption of whalesafe fishing gear modifications to reduce the impact of entanglements on NARW. The shallow water pilot option is only available to harvesters fishing in waters shallower than the 20 fathom management line within the dynamic areas (Gulf of St. Lawrence, Bay of Fundy and Roseway Basin Critical Habitat areas). **Participation in the pilot will allow harvesters to continue fishing in shallow water fishing prohibition areas** following a single NARW detection, when equipped with whalesafe gear modifications. These changes were developed to continue protection of the endangered NARW while recognizing the unique realities of inshore fisheries. This pilot also supports the advancement of Canada's Whalesafe Gear Strategy.

The pilot project requirements are as follows:

- To continue fishing in areas closed due to NARW detection in shallow water, harvesters will be required to:
 - Trawl up their traps/pots as per the conditions of licence for the fishery, for the duration of a fishing prohibition.
 - Use a single buoy line per trawl (drop one buoy line).
 - Equip the remaining buoy line with a lower breaking-strength modification recognized by the Department, for the duration of a fishing prohibition.
- Inclusion of conditions specifying the above requirements in the eligible fisheries' commercial conditions of licence is required in order to participate.
- Eligible harvesters will be asked to complete a post-season questionnaire, to be shared at a later date by DFO regional offices.

Harvesters not participating in the pilot **will be required to comply with shallow water fishing prohibitions**. Their gear must be removed from the closed area for the duration of the fishing prohibition .

All harvesters must remove all gear from shallow water fishing prohibition areas if the fishing prohibition is triggered by a detection of three or more right whales or mother and calf pairs in waters shallower than the 20 fathom management line.

Harvesters participating in the pilot must also comply with fishing prohibition in waters deeper than the 20 fathom management line as per existing dynamic and seasonal fishing prohibition protocols.

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.