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# *Notice to Fish Harvesters*

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## **2018 CONSERVATION AND HARVESTING PLAN FOR THE ROCK CRAB FISHERY IN LOBSTER FISHING AREA 26A**

**July 30, 2018**

**Moncton, (NB)** – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Gulf Region, is announcing the management measures for the Rock Crab fishery in the Lobster Fishing Area (LFA) 26A that will be in effect for the 2018 fishing season.

### **Season dates**

The opening date will be 6:00 a.m., Monday August 6, 2018. The last day of fishing will be Saturday, November 24, 2018 (inclusively).

DFO wishes to remind fish harvesters to take extra care when navigating on the opening day of the rock crab fishery as vessels are loaded with gear and traps. Harvesters are encouraged to act diligently in setting their traps and should ensure that vessels are loaded safely by reducing the quantity of gear if necessary.

### **NEW management measures to be implemented for the 2018 fishing season:**

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 rock crab fishery.

#### **Fishing Gear: Reducing the amount of rope floating on the surface of the water**

The following requirements will be in place to minimize the length of rope floating on the surface of the water and to reduce the risks of entanglements:

- No rope attaching a rock crab trap to a primary buoy shall remain floating on the surface of the water after the rock crab trap has been set.

If using multiple traps per line:

- No rope attaching a rock crab trap to another rock crab trap shall remain floating on the surface of the water after the rock crab trap has been set.

If fishing with a primary and secondary buoy:

- A maximum of 3.7 meters of rope shall be used when attaching a primary buoy to a secondary buoy.

Note: A primary buoy is defined as a buoy or other floating device attached to a trap. A secondary buoy is defined as a buoy or other floating device attached to a primary buoy.

#### Requirement to report lost gear

Licence holders will be required to report lost gear. This new management measure will help quantify the amount of gear lost annually and identify the need to increase efforts to retrieve gear that has been lost, which would reduce the risks of whale entanglements.

The following specific information must be reported to DFO by email ([DFO.GLF.Gear-Engins.GLF.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:DFO.GLF.Gear-Engins.GLF.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)) within 72 hours of noticing that the gear has been lost:

- sequence number of tag attached to the rock crab trap that has been lost;
- vessel registration number or vessel identification number in the case of Aboriginal licence conditions;
- latitude and longitude of last known position of lost rock crab trap; and
- date the rock crab trap was last fished.

#### Marine mammal interaction reporting

In order to comply with the implementation of the US *Marine Mammals Protection Act* (MMPA) regulations, licence holders must now provide information regarding all interactions with a marine mammal including: bycatch, collisions and all sightings of entangled marine mammals that occur during fishing expeditions.

A Marine Mammal Interaction Form (included with licence conditions) must be completed and submitted by email to [DFO.NAT.InteractionsMM-InteractionsMM.NAT.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:DFO.NAT.InteractionsMM-InteractionsMM.NAT.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) within 48 hours after the end of a fishing trip.

The information provided on the form will be used by DFO to estimate levels of accidental mortality and injury to marine mammals. This information will allow DFO to better assess the types of threats that may affect Canada's marine mammals and to develop mitigation strategies.

#### Requirement to report sightings of live whales

Sightings of live, free-swimming whales must be reported to DFO by telephone: 1-844-800-8568, or by email: [XMARwhalesightings@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:XMARwhalesightings@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).

#### Protocol for the dynamic management of the fisheries

DFO implemented a protocol for the dynamic management of the fisheries in 2018 which close areas to fishing activities when the presence of NARW is observed. This protocol allows DFO to close

specific areas to fishing activities to prevent incidents with NARW, such as entanglements. DFO uses the existing soft shell/white crab grids to close areas due to the presence of NARW. These measures may be adapted as needed over the season.

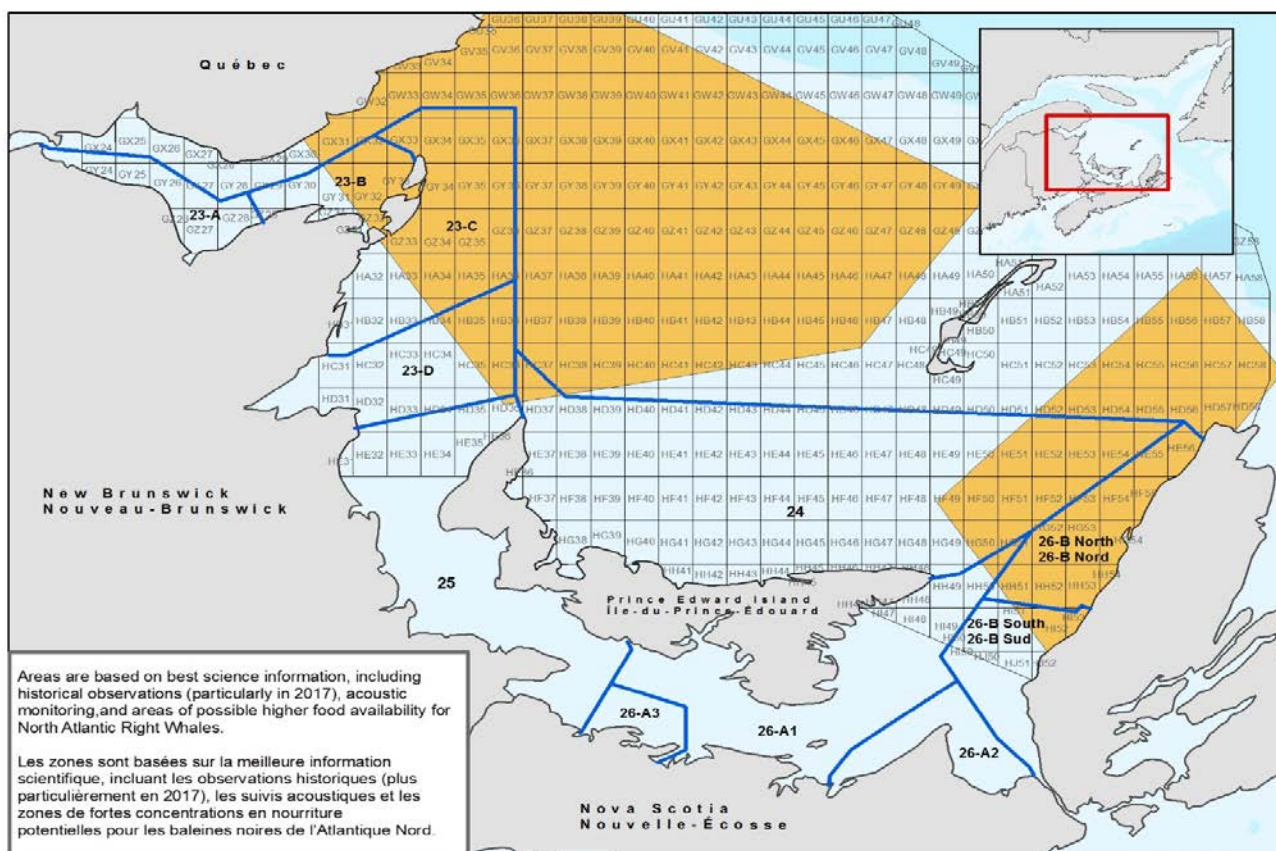
### *Observations inside a foraging area*

When one NARW is observed inside a foraging area (see map below), a maximum of nine grids in the foraging area will be closed to provide a buffer area around the sighting location to account for whale movements.

### *Closing and reopening of the areas*

Closures will be in force for a minimum period of 15 days and will be extended by a minimum of 15 days from the last NARW sighting. If NARWs are not seen during at least two aerial surveillance flights during the 15 days period, the dynamic closure for the relevant sections will be lifted at the end of the period. Closures will be regulated through variation orders and licence holders will be provided an advance notice of 48 hours to retrieve fishing gear from the area prior to closure.

Map of the foraging areas and Lobster Fishing Areas



**Other Management Measures which will continue to apply in 2018:**

**Biodegradable**

**Panels:** The use of biodegradable panels on all traps, including modified lobster traps, is mandatory. Please refer to your Licence Conditions for specifications on these panels.

**Dockside**

**Monitoring:** Licence holders are responsible for making arrangements with dockside monitoring companies for data entry of catch and effort information; a condition to this effect is included in all licences. Note that all the catch must be weighed in kilograms (kg) at one decimal point on an approved scale.

**Logbooks:** Logbooks/landing reports are mandatory and must be completed as stipulated in licence conditions.

**Number of traps:** Commercial licences - 90 traps.  
Communal commercial licences – 90 traps.

**Catch limitation:** Commercial licences – 23,913 kg.  
Communal commercial licences – 23,913 kg.

**Minimum size:** Only male rock crabs, with a minimum carapace width size of 108 mm, may be retained in the directed fishery.

DFO will continue to honour the principle that prioritizes the fishery as follows: lobster by-catch; lobster bait; directed rock crab fishery.

**For more information, please contact:**

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