



RR #4 Baddeck
Nova Scotia, B0E 1B0
Phone/Fax : (902) 929-2757
Email : lfa27board@gmail.com
Website : www.lfa27.com

Response to DFO's discussion document "The future of Canada's commercial Fisheries"

The LFA27 Management Board was incorporated in early 2010 as a non-profit organization striving towards the sustainability of our lobster fishery. It was conceived by port representatives from throughout the LFA, representatives of the 2 local fishermen's organizations, and Cape Breton (Unama'ki) Mi'kmaq First Nations with LFA27 access. Lobster Fishing Area 27 covers the ports between and including Bay St. Lawrence and Gabarus and has 524 licensed lobster fishermen and women.

This LFA is home to a total of 524 full-time and part-time commercial licence holders. 484 of the licence holders fish out of the Maritimes management region and 40 fish out of Gulf management region. These commercial licence holders operate out of 25 to 30 active ports from Bay St. Lawrence to Gabarus (though DFO lists 44 coastal ports). The distribution of vessels within these ports varies in size. There are 35 ports with less than 20 vessels, while 7 have 20 – 39 vessels, and 2 have greater than 40 vessels. Thus the majority of this LFA is rural and this fishery supports many families in Cape Breton's rural coastal communities.

The lobster license holders in LFA27 are stewards of the lobster resource

The LFA has been a model for improved sustainability for more than a decade. LFA 27 lobster fishermen implemented two significant increases in the minimum legal size (MLS): one from 1997 to 2002 increasing from 70 to 76 mm CL and another from 2007 to 2009 increasing to 81 mm CL. These size increases were voted in by the lobster fishermen and women. Through 1994-1996 a series of port cluster meetings took place throughout LFA 27. These meetings shared the results of tagging studies which indicated that lobster move relatively little from year to year. Discussions took place regarding what management measures might increase viability of the lobster fishery. A large majority of license holders of the day attended these meetings. The outcome was more participation with science – more tagging studies, log books for Science; and eventual votes by lobster fishermen to increase the minimum carapace size.

LFA27 lobster license holders contributed towards lobster science

Fishermen and women in LFA 27 are and have been active participants in a variety of studies to support and address ecosystem impacts on the fishery. Harvesters participated in a variety of DFO studies on movement and growth of lobster, size at maturity, escape vent size and the development of methods to survey young-of-the-year lobsters (settlers). Volunteer fishermen also send in logbooks at the end of each season to DFO science with information on effort (number of traps hauled) and catch data and the number of berried females. Many fishermen and women in the LFA contribute their vessel's time, their own time and labour towards studies without any monetary compensation. One particular labour-intensive project, the lobster recruitment project, requires fishermen to set science traps specifically designed to trap juvenile lobster. They must set and haul 3 to 5 of these traps on a daily basis, measure and sex the lobster caught within, record the data and send it in at the end of the season.

The future of Canada's Commercial fisheries

Lobster harvesters in LFA27 are long-standing stewards of the lobster fishery in LFA27. They are involved and contribute their time and labour towards science to study this fishery and contribute to discussions with DFO in lobster stock assessments and other scientific results.

In favour of the owner operator and fleet separation policies

The LFA27 Management Board thus requests that the document produced by DFO include a protection for independent inshore fishermen and women so that we may continue to be stewards of this fishery. We recommend that the owner operator and fleet separation policies are legally entrenched and thus enforceable by law. We strongly believe that restructuring the fishery, without these policies in place, would result in poor management, lack of stewardship and a loss of a long history of knowledge about the resource. The same would apply for any fishery that has been fished by generations of small inshore, community-minded fishermen and women.

Requesting an increase in science funding

We also recommend an increase in the department's science budget for all fisheries. As independent harvesters, we have contributed much time, resources and efforts towards collecting scientific data for DFO scientists who analyze the data and produce stock assessments and other documents necessary in improving the management of the fisheries. We recommend that DFO raise their contributions towards science. In recent years, budget cuts have compromised the amount and quality of scientific research despite the fact that fishermen have increased their efforts to collect the data.

The LFA27 Management Board looks forward to further consultations to discuss the future of our fishery.