

New DFO agreement with four Mi'kmaq bands to fish within season a new step to increase commercial fisheries

Coalition calls for formal discussions on future of fishery

SHEDIAC, NB, Oct. 15, 2021 /CNW/ - Albeit no specific details are being released about the new fishery, the Coalition of Atlantic and Quebec Fishing Organizations recognizes a new agreement between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and four local Mi'kmaq bands around the St-Mary's Bay Area (Acadia, Bear River, Annapolis and Glooscap) may be a tentative positive step in advancing stability in the fishery.

"The fact that the agreement focuses effort on fishing within season and without adding to the overall effort is critically important to keeping the fishery sustainable for Indigenous and non-Indigenous commercial fishers," said Martin Mallet, Executive Director of the Maritime Fishermen's Union.

However, the process for the agreements, which is reshaping the management of the commercial fishery, is flawed because commercial fishing organizations are completely excluded from direct talks between Indigenous leaders and DFO.

"It is completely unacceptable to exclude commercial fishing organizations from direct talks with DFO and Indigenous leaders on the management of the fishery, given the foreseeable impacts on the fishery management and access to fisheries for all Canadians of the changes implemented by DFO across the Atlantic," said Gordon Beaton, Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board president. "Commercial fishing organizations must have a seat at the table on fishery management."

"Folding the moderate livelihood within season is a positive step but the definition of what makes for a moderate livelihood for Indigenous Peoples is still undefined," said PEIFA president Bobby Jenkins. "We need clarity on what moderate livelihood means because of confusion where some say it is only for food, social and ceremonial purposes while other believe is it much more."

DFO also needs to be much more transparent on its long-term plans and objectives for the commercial fishery. "The process needs to be revised. Indigenous and non-indigenous communities have worked

together in the past to solve issues and collaborate in the fisheries sector. However, the current federal process is alienating communities, while Ottawa thinks it's reconciliation. Canadians clearly want a model where everyone is around the table," states O'Neil Cloutier, general director of the Regroupement des Pêcheurs Professionnels du Sud de la Gaspésie.

The current process remains flawed, DFO is not transparent on its end game and there is confusion on the definition of moderate livelihood. Decisions on the management of the fishery need to be both science-based, transparent and based on respectful dialogue between DFO, Indigenous leaders and commercial fishing organizations.

For more information on the activities of the Coalition, including background documents and polling on the views of Canadians visit www.1fishery.ca.

COALITION OF ATLANTIC AND QUÉBEC FISHING ORGANIZATIONS

We are a movement of fishermen committed to a sustainable healthy fishery and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

- Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board (GNSFPB)
- Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU)
- PEI Fishermen's Association (PEIFA)
- Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie (RPPSG)

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