

Immediate closure of herring and mackerel commercial fisheries a broadside into coastal fishing communities

Up to 10,000 fishers in Atlantic Canada and Québec may be hurt by Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) decision

April 5th, 2022 (Shediac, NB) – On March 30th, 2022, DFO announced the closure of the commercial fishery for herring and Atlantic mackerel to rebuild key forage fish stocks for a healthier East Coast fishery. The Coalition of Atlantic and Québec fishing organizations questions the rapidity of the government decision and the lack of transparency in the science.

“How do you go from a no closure to a closure situation without consulting commercial fishers,” said Martin Mallet, MFU Executive Director. “The 2021 stock assessment showed that the 4000t quota would enable recovery of the resource. This decision had been taken in collaboration with industry, and we were to revise the situation after the next stock assessment in 2023. Without consultation or even advance notice of a potential problem, DFO has slammed the commercial fishery.”

This unilateral closure of the spring herring and mackerel commercial fisheries will have a major negative impact on the fishery since these fish are a significant source of bait for the lobster and snow crab fisheries. “This decision will take bait out of the system and will lead to pressure on other fisheries and greatly inflated bait prices,” said Bobby Jenkins, PEIFA President. “The Coalition of Atlantic and Québec Fishing Organizations supports sustainable management, but decisions should be made on a transparent stock survey by DFO and dialogue with commercial fishing organizations.”

“In the case of mackerel, the reality is that this stock is also shared with the US, there is no plan, the Americans continue to fish, and this decision puts our share of the fishery at risk,” says Gordon Beaton, President of the Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board.

The decision today is reminiscent of past fishery management decisions by DFO.

“I started in the ground fishery and lived through the 1990s moratorium and the negative consequences which are still being felt today,” said O’Neil Cloutier, Director General of the RPPSG. “We need a better path forward than what DFO did with the ground fishery in the 1990s.”

The Coalition is requesting that the federal Fisheries Minister immediately meet with commercial fishing organizations, to transparently share the science behind the radical decision and to consider a delay in the closures so that the fishery can be managed in an orderly manner that respects sustainability.

How can any ministry take drastic action like this without consulting the industry it regulates? The big question from the viewpoint of the Coalition: Where did the minister get the advice to move forward on this unilateral decision that impacts the fishery without consulting the industry.

The Coalition of Atlantic and Québec Fishing Organizations is committed to a sustainable fishery, where decisions are based on science, transparent dialogue, and real consultation.

For more information on the activities of the Coalition visit www.1fishery.ca.

COALITION OF ATLANTIC AND QUÉBEC FISHING ORGANIZATIONS

- 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)

MEDIA Coordination:

Annie Chiasson
coalition@1fishery.ca
+1 (506) 727-8160