

## 2005/2006/2007 LOBSTER FISHERY PLAN

### Survival Committee of the Association des Pêcheurs de l'Île de Miscou Inc.

As you know, the snow crab quota was given to the MFU by Minister Reagan. What we are now asking of our employees or more accurately of MFU senior management is our share of snow crab so it can be harvested and managed by the Association des Pêcheurs de l'Île de Miscou Inc. The main purpose of sharing the snow crab quota between midshore and inshore fish harvesters is to assist the LOBSTER HARVESTERS.

We must recognize that lobster harvesters are in financial difficulty. Lobster catches have declined by 50 percent over the past 10 years. At this rate, another five-year program managed by the directors of MFU and Co. may very well eliminate the last inshore lobster harvesters. Today, in large part, lobster harvesters must negotiate payment agreements with their financial institutions, and if the institution cannot accept partial or deferred payment, some fish harvesters are forced to turn to buyers or processing plants for a cash advance in exchange for signing a promise to sell their catch.

In the past three years, we have launched the following protective efforts: increasing our measurement from 2 ½ to 2 ¾: over a three-year period, and cutting 75 lobster traps for each harvester, at the rate of 25 traps a year. A reduction of 75 lobster traps for each harvester is equivalent to a total of 16 harvesters. Despite all this, the resource has not grown.

For this reason, we are seeking a fair share for all lobster harvesters in our association. We want to manage our snow crab the way we see fit, to keep the money in our region.

We currently have a proposal for a fishery plan to assist our resource and secure our future in the fishery.

The proposed fishing effort would be a three-year pilot project. It meets the expectations of Minister Reagan as well as the criteria of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Some points explained below could be combined where necessary.

- ▶ No fishing in the last week, as a conservation measure  
If 63 fish harvesters withdraw in the last week and leave an average of 600 pounds each, approximately 37,800 pounds of lobster will remain on the fishing bank.
- ▶ Introduction of master weighers (fishery weighing)  
To count all landings of lobster
- ▶ Research on lobster stocks (biologists and on-board observers)  
To determine and assess the locations of mature and juvenile lobsters on the Miscou bank
- ▶ Standardize the size of lobster traps  
The allowed size would be 24" x 36" with one compartment, to reduce the fishing effort by approximately 40 percent.
- ▶ Limit on traps per fishing line  
Fishing effort will be reduced since each harvester will have 43 lines of seven traps instead of 60 lines of five traps.
- ▶ Regularization of lobster shell size at three inches over the long term  
This protective measure would allow more juvenile lobster to reach maturity and reproduce before their shell reaches allowable catch size.

- ▶ Lobster harvesters selected to fish for snow crab should give their tags to the Association des Pêcheurs de l'Île de Miscou Inc. for the entire current season. That way, at least three lobster harvesters would be retired from this fishery for the season, resulting in 900 fewer traps and several thousand pounds of uncaught lobster.
- ▶ The rings holding the escape mechanism (commonly called hug rings) should be biodegradable on all lobster traps without exception.
- ▶ Organize trips to sea to recover abandoned or lost ghost traps, using grapnels.
- ▶ Respect for traditional fishing areas of each community or wharf, to avoid overfishing, which places too much stress on lobster stocks.

For more information, please contact representatives of the Survival Committee of the Association des Pêcheurs de l'Île de Miscou Inc. (New Brunswick)

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Sincerely,

The Survival Committee, Association des Pêcheurs de l'Île de Miscou Inc.