



Wednesday, March 31, 2015

The Honourable Gail Shea  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
200 Kent Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0E6

**Re: Snow Crab Co-Management in and Adjacent to the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area**

Dear Minister Shea,

The Torngat Joint Fisheries Board ('the Board') here offers its recommendations for the 2015 Snow Crab fishery in area 2HJN.

The snow crab resource status in 2HJN is more positive than it has been in recent years, and the Nunatsiavut Government has demonstrated its ability to manage within the Total Allowable Catch. With this being the case, the Board recommends that:

- The TAC of 312MT in area 2HJN be maintained for the 2015 season.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your department on this important file, and we are available at your convenience to discuss it further.

Yours truly,

John Mercer  
Chair  
Torngat Joint Fisheries Board



## **Torngat Joint Fisheries Board**

Memorandum to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
Snow Crab Co-Management in 2HJN  
(Wednesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015)

**Issue:** Snow Crab Co-Management In and Adjacent to the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area.

### **Recommendation:**

1. Maintain the TAC of 312MT in area 2HJN for the 2015 season.

### **1.0 Background:**

- The Nunatsiavut Government and the Torngat Fish Producers Co-operative are the sole license-holders in Area 2HJN, with a combined Total Allowable Catch of 312MT in 2014.
- The TAC in 2HJN has declined since 2008 to 312MT in 2014. The TAC has not been landed since 2008.
- In 2010 the Board recommended TAC status quo in areas 2H and 2JN (later merged into 2HJN in 2012). In 2011 the Board recommended TAC status quo: the Minister decided to decrease the TAC in 2H by 30% (from 100MT to 70MT). In 2012 the Board recommended that the TAC in 2HJN be decreased by 15%: the recommendation was accepted. In 2013 the Board recommended that the TAC in 2HJN be decreased by 15%: the recommendation was accepted. In 2014 the Board recommended that the TAC be decreased by 15%: the recommendation was rejected but the Nunatsiavut Government withheld 15% of the TAC.
- New information since the TJFB 2014 recommendation comes from fishery performance, fisheries science, and consultation.

### **2.0 Quota**

- 100 MT Exploratory in 2HN (not allocated – no effort)
- 312mt in 2HJN
- The Nunatsiavut Government withheld 15% of the TAC, for an Available Harvest Level (AHL) of 264MT.

### **3.0 Management Objective:**

- The management objective for Snow Crab in Newfoundland and Labrador is “to conserve the Snow Crab resource to provide commercial sustainability to fish harvesters” (IFMP 2007-2009).

#### **4.0 Management Goals (IFMP 2007-2009):**

- “The harvest strategy for the Snow Crab fishery is composed of technical conservation measures designed to safeguard recruitment and a TAC based on a sustainable proportion of the fishable biomass” (MSC, 2013). Specific goals of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan are as follows:
  1. Maintain the reproductive capacity of the resource.
  2. Maintain stable or increasing quotas.
  3. Set exploitation rates to increase the probability that economical catch rates will be maintained.
  4. Recognize uncontrollable ecosystem impacts.

#### **5.0 Management Tools:**

1. Use of areas to distribute effort.
2. Total Allowable Catch for each area.
3. Prohibition against harvesting females and juvenile males.
4. Minimize fishing-induced mortality (seasons, soft-shell protocol, handling practices, discouragement of illegal practices such as high-grading, biodegradable twine).

#### **6.0 Resource Status:**

- Understandings of resource status are based on trends in fishery performance (primarily as a measure of catch-per-unit effort), exploitable biomass indices, recruitment prospects, and mortality indices. Sources of information in 2HJN include Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), logbooks, observer data, the DFO post-season multispecies bottom trawl survey, the Industry-DFO collaborative post-season trap survey, and a post-season trap survey in 2HJN (TJFB-DFO). In all cases, except where specified, the indicators are collected in 2J South and generalized to 2HJN, or are collected in both areas but not disaggregated in subsequent analysis. The Secretariat has annually requested that DFO data for 2HJN be disaggregated from 2JS, and we recommend that this become standard practice.

#### **6.1 Fishery Performance:**

##### *6.1.1 Landings*

- 2012: 183MT landed / 184MT in the water (49.9% landed)
- 2013: 52.3MT landed / 259.7MT in the water (17% landed)

- 2014: 232.1MT / 31.4MT of the available harvest level (AHL) in the water (74.9% of the TAC landed; 88.1% of the AHL landed)

#### *6.1.2 Effort*

- 2012: 183MT landed in 27 trips
- 2013: 52.3MT landed in 7 trips
- 2014: 232.1MT landed in 7 trips. (This is not a comparable measure of catch-per-unit-effort, as this was the first year with three refrigerated sea water (RSW) vessels operating in the fishery).

#### *6.1.3 Catch-per-unit Effort*

- Catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) declined from 2008 to 2011, was unchanged in 2012, and has increased since.
- Some uncertainty in 2014 CPUE because the three indices (observer, logbook, and VMS disagreed). Challenges with all indices because of 1) low observer coverage, 2) poor logbook returns (50% in 2014), and 3) many vessels not equipped with VMS.
- 2014: 232.1MT landed in 7 trips. (This is not a comparable measure of catch-per-unit-effort, as this was the first year with three refrigerated sea water (RSW) vessels operating in the fishery).

#### *6.2 Exploitable biomass indices*

- The exploitable biomass declined from 2006 to 2011, was unchanged in 2012, and has increased since.

#### *6.3 Recruitment/Recruitment Prospects*

- Recruitment declined from 2006 to 2011, changed little in 2012, and has increased since.
- Short-term (2-3 year) recruitment prospects are uncertain.

#### *6.4 Mortality Indices*

- Pre-recruit fishing mortality has increased over the past ten years to above the median level. Percentage of the catch handled and released in the fishery increased from 20% in 2013 to 30% in 2014.

### **6.5 *Exploitation Rate Index***

- The exploitation rate increased from 2007-2012, and has decreased since. Maintaining the current level of removals would reduce the exploitation rate further in 2015.

## **7.0 Consultation**

### **7.1 *Workshop***

- The TJFB and the Nunatsiavut Government co-hosted a Snow Crab Workshop in Happy Valley – Goose Bay in November of 2014. Participants recommended TAC status quo.

### **7.2 *Nunatsiavut Government***

- The Nunatsiavut Government has not released a formal recommendation.
- The Board consulted with the president of the Nunatsiavut Government and the Director of Renewable Resources in Nain in March of 2015.
- The Nunatsiavut Government has demonstrated that they have the ability to withhold a portion of the TAC.

## **8.0 Management Options:**

### **8.1 *TAC Status Quo***

- Short-term recruitment prospects are uncertain and fishing mortality has increased and is above the long-term mean.
- A recommendation for status quo would be completely consistent with discussions at the Snow Crab Workshop.

### **8.2 *TAC Increase***

- Landings, CPUE, biomass indices, and pre-recruit biomass indices have all increased since 2012, while the exploitation rate has decreased and is expected to continue to decrease at 2014 removal levels.

### **8.3 *TAC Decrease***

- Only landings, which have fallen short of the TAC, would rationalize a TAC reduction.



## 9.0 Recommendation

- The Torngat Joint Fisheries Board recommends that the TAC in 2HJN remain at 312MT for 2015.