



Summary: Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest Community Open Houses

October 30, 2018 Tangier Fire Hall, Tangier, NS

November 7, Moser River Community Centre, Moser River, NS

Participants

In Attendance (at one or both events)

DFO Staff: Wendy Williams, Glen Herbert, Derek Fenton, Tanya Koropatnick, Marty King, Leah McConney, Alex Macnab, Elise Will, Bryden Bone

Approximately 80 residents attended the event in Tangier, and approximately 30 residents attended the event in Moser River.

Event Objectives

The purpose of these two DFO-hosted public events was to share information, answer questions, and hear from the local community about the Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest (AOI) for *Oceans Act* Marine Protected Area (MPA) designation. Both sessions were set up as full day (10:30-6:30 pm), exhibition-style events with information provided in posters, handouts, and through informal conversation with DFO staff (8 staff members were present for each event).

What We Heard

Feedback on the potential Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest was mixed. Some attendees were interested in the potential opportunities offered by the AOI, most people came in with questions, and some had serious concerns. Available resources and one-on-one conversation with DFO staff were aimed at helping to clarify misconceptions and address the concerns of attendees. Major “take home messages” provided by participants to staff are summarized below:

- The fishery is the backbone of the community (culture, economy) of the eastern shore.
- The area is beautiful and special, and it should be kept that way.
- It is essential that DFO involves the users of the area in MPA design – otherwise it will be a paper park.
- People are worried MPA restrictions will impact how they use and enjoy the area.
- The AOI process is creating uncertainty for local industry. Some residents are concerned that there may be an impact on future development / current investment.
- Wording like “DFO expects that the lobster fishery would be allowed to continue” leaves too much uncertainty. The risk assessment needs to be completed as soon as possible so that this wording can be strengthened.
- There is a lot of distrust of government in the community as a result of past experience with municipal, provincial and federal government actions.
- Activities in the area are already regulated – what can an MPA offer that would add value?
- A number of residents expressed concerns about local rockweed harvesting activities.
- There were mixed feelings about the potential of an MPA to bring more visitors to the area. While some were excited about potential economic benefits, others were concerned about impacts related to increased tourism.

Discussion Themes

Most of the questions and discussion at both events focused around a few key themes (discussion points shared with participants for each theme are provided below):

1. Where did this AOI come from?
2. MPA establishment process
3. Information gathering and assessment
4. What activities could be affected by an Eastern Shore Islands MPA?
5. Management of MPAs once they are established
6. Why do we need an MPA on the Eastern Shore?
7. Rockweed harvesting



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| 1. | <p>Where did this AOI come from?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Eastern Shore Islands AOI was selected from a larger science-driven effort to develop a draft MPA network plan for the region. This process included extensive and ongoing consultation with First Nations, Indigenous groups, provinces and other government agencies, stakeholders (including the fishing industry) and community groups. The draft MPA network design will be released for consultation once discussions with federal, provincial and Indigenous partners have concluded. |
| 2. | <p>MPA establishment process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AOI was announced on March 22, 2018; this announcement marks the beginning of the MPA establishment process. Since then, DFO has met with a working group composed of the membership of the Eastern Shore Fishermen’s Protection Association three times, and convened the first meeting of the multi-sector advisory committee for the AOI in September. DFO is currently working to complete the information gathering and analysis step (Step 2) of the MPA establishment process, which includes an assessment of risks posed by activities to the conservation priorities that have been identified for proposed MPA. The AOI is a study area only, and no decisions have been made regarding the design of the proposed MPA, including boundaries, prohibited activities or other aspects of a future regulatory proposal for the area. Proposed MPA boundaries and zones are developed based on information gathering, analysis and extensive consultation. An MPA on the eastern shore could look quite different than the AOI. Not all AOIs become MPAs. One of the outputs of the AOI process is a recommendation to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard on whether or not the AOI should become an MPA, along with details about zones, boundaries and allowable activities if the recommendation is to proceed with draft MPA regulations. This AOI was announced as part of a nation-wide effort to increase the protection of Canada’s coastal and ocean waters to 10% by the year 2020. While DFO is working with this timeline in mind, the establishment process for a potential Eastern Shore Islands MPA will not be compromised or cut short to meet this national deadline. |
| 3. | <p>Information gathering and assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a lot of interest expressed by participants in a proposed socio-economic study, which will include a profile of the demographic and socio-economic landscape of communities adjacent to the AOI along with a review of potential opportunities and disadvantages of an MPA for the eastern shore. A work description has been drafted for such a study with input from the AOI Advisory Committee. The project will be completed by a consultant by end of March, 2019. The report will be shared with the Advisory Committee and posted on the AOI website. An assessment of risks posed by human activities to the conservation priorities identified for the potential MPA is currently underway. This assessment will help to determine which activities are compatible with an Eastern Shore Islands MPA and which activities would need to be restricted or excluded to protect the key ecological features of the area. The risk assessment of the lobster fishery will be completed first to provide more certainty with respect to messaging about the expected compatibility of this activity with a future MPA. The full assessment will be ready for review in draft form by early 2019. |
| 4. | <p>What activities could be affected by an Eastern Shore Islands MPA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities that would not be affected by an Eastern Shore Islands MPA include: property ownership, wharf construction and repair, activities on land (e.g., hunting, camping), activities in the intertidal zone (e.g., clamming, rockweed harvesting), recreational boating, recreational fishing, other recreational activities (e.g., swimming, kayaking, SCUBA diving, etc.), and Food, Social and |



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| | <p>Ceremonial fishing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other activities, such as commercial fisheries, are being analyzed through an ecological risk assessment. Examples of low impact commercial fishing activities expected to be compatible with a future Eastern Shore Islands MPA include: lobster, snow crab, groundfish fixed gear, herring/herring roe gillnet, dive fisheries, and bait fisheries. |
| 5. | <p>Management of MPAs once they are established</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the management of the Gully, Musquash Estuary, and St. Anns Bank MPAs was provided (see the DFO website for information on these and other <i>Oceans Act</i> MPAs: http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/mpa-zpm-aoi-si-eng.html). Once an MPA is established, the Advisory Committee (including regulators, First Nations, Indigenous organizations, and representatives from industry and the local community) continues to provide input into the on-going management of the site. Management plans are reviewed regularly, new science is considered, human activities are monitored, activity applications are reviewed, and the overall MPA effectiveness is evaluated on a regular basis. While MPA regulations can be changed once an MPA has been established, changes are infrequent, and difficult to make. Just like with the establishment of the MPA, any major change (e.g., zoning adjustment or new allowable activity) would involve consultation with First Nations, Indigenous groups, other governments, industry stakeholders and the community, and a public review and comment period. DFO MPA staff work with the Conservation and Protection Branch to develop appropriate monitoring and surveillance plans for each MPA. While MPAs are enforced by C&P officers, DFO can also collaborate with other agencies to increase surveillance presence in MPAs. |
| 6. | <p>Why do we need an MPA on the eastern shore?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPAs are proactive management tools that help to protect and conserve ecosystem health while ensuring local communities can continue to sustainably use and enjoy the area. An Eastern Shore Islands MPA could help prevent future incompatible (e.g., industrial) marine-based activities, protect current low-impact fisheries (e.g., lobster and other fixed gear fisheries), and encourage new opportunities, such as nature-based tourism. MPAs provide a focus for scientific research, education and outreach, and present opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with First Nations, fishing industry, academia, and the local community. An MPA on the eastern shore would not create further complexity for activities that are already well regulated. For example fisheries would still be managed using license conditions under the <i>Fisheries Act</i>. |
| 7. | <p>Rockweed harvesting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oceans Act MPAs extend to the low tide line, so intertidal activities, such as rockweed harvesting, would occur outside of the MPA boundary. Acadian Seaplants holds the lease for rockweed harvesting in the intertidal areas adjacent to the AOI. Harvesting within lease areas is managed by the Province of Nova Scotia. Acadian Seaplants has a seat on the AOI Advisory Committee. Rockweed provides important habitat for many species. It is important that the rockweed harvest is carried out in a sustainable manner to ensure the health of the marine ecosystem. Concerns expressed by local residents about the rockweed harvest will be passed along to the Province of |



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| | Nova Scotia. | |
| Targeted feedback | | |
| Several stations were set up with specific questions posed to participants. These are provided below along with the responses received from participants. | | |
| 1. | What science questions do you have about the eastern shore islands? | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the removal of rockweed affect the wildlife and fishers? • Can wild Atlantic salmon be supported to make a come-back in our waters? • How much tourism traffic can the area support before the islands are adversely affected? • Normally winter storms bring lots of rockweed onto shore. This year very little rockweed has washed up. What are the impacts of the rockweed harvest on the ecosystem? • How does biomass differ on the Eastern Shore from other areas? • Is there evidence to suggest the cod are now significantly smaller than they used to be in this area? • What (if any) new species are we seeing due to rising water temperature and climate change? • How can an MPA help this area adapt to climate change? • How might the lobster fishery be affected by climate change? • Need to monitor for changing temperature, pH, oxygen levels | |
| 2. | Activities in and adjacent to the Area of Interest include: Commercial and bait fisheries (lobster, groundfish, hagfish, snow crab, herring/herring roe, mackerel, tuna, scallop, rockweed harvest); tourism and recreation (kayaking, boat tours, hunting, recreational fishing); and aquaculture (finfish, shellfish, marine plants). Are there activities that we are missing? | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eel/elver fishery • Smelt fishery • Dive fishery for scallop • Recreational activities on the islands • Swimming, surfing, kite surfing • Scuba diving, snorkeling • Commercial tourism activities (boat tours, kayaking tours) | |
| 3. | Community values: Participants were asked to take 4 stickers and vote for “What is important to you in the Eastern Shore Islands AOI”. Space was provided for additional values to be written in case we missed something (indicated by *). Results are provided below. | |
| | Traditional inshore fisheries continue | 36 |
| | Conserving the culture of the Eastern Shore | 20 |
| | Protecting the quality of the marine environment for current and future generations | 40 |
| | Tourism opportunities | 12 |
| | Accessibility to the marine environment | 15 |
| | Education and stewardship opportunities | 10 |
| | More scientific research and study | 12 |
| | Maintaining recreation opportunities (hunting, boating, fishing) | 32 |
| | Economic development* | 18 |

