Halibut Longline survey participation background

The Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board was asked to collaborate on a scientific tagging and survey fishery for Atlantic halibut in 2017, 2018 and ongoing up to 5 years. The purpose of this project is to collect data on the abundance, distribution and biology of Atlantic halibut in the Gulf of St. Lawrence through an industry-supported scientific survey. The survey is a random (location) stratified longline sampling, tagging Atlantic halibut of all sex and sizes. The project is being undertaken with participation and assistance from the following groups: UQAR-ISMER, Memorial University, UQAP, PEIFA, FFAW, ACPG, GNSFPB, and DFO.

In 2018, the GNSFPB was responsible for conducting the scientific survey and tagging for Atlantic halibut at 8 stations off the Gulf of NS. Five harvesters took part in the survey. Each station was allocated 400 kg of halibut to be landed, with a total of 3200 kg of halibut to be caught under the scientific permit. As the station locations are scientifically randomized, not based on traditional fishing grounds, some of the stations will tag 0 halibut. In 2018, halibut were tagged at two stations; 1 tagged at station 21 and 33 tagged at station 106.

The GNSFPB provides regional the data to DFO. Along with their research partners, DFO will provide a Gulf-wide analysis of Atlantic halibut migration ecology. The objectives of DFOs program is to:

1. Reveal seasonal migrations and spawning areas throughout the GSL using satellite tagging (Le Bris, Fisher et al.)
2. Assess changes in environmental associations during a seasonal cycle to inform the new longline survey (Robert, Fisher, Le Bris et al.)
3. Identify nursery areas by modelling the drift of eggs and larvae (Dumont et al.)
4. Assess connectivity/isolation among the sectors of the GSL through otolith chemistry (Sirois et al.)