

Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board

Scientific Fishery for Atlantic Halibut

2020



Final Report
12-15-2020

Introduction

The Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board (GNSFPB) was asked to collaborate on a scientific tagging and survey fishery for Atlantic halibut in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. 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 GNSFPB contributes this data to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), as well as produces a brief report with our regional results. This report details the 2020 results of the scientific survey.

The GNSFPB worked with the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association (PEIFA) to divide the scientific stations to be fished off Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. The project specifics were discussed between the GNSFPB, PEIFA and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) over multiple in-person and teleconference meetings before the beginning of the scientific fishery for Atlantic halibut.

The GNSFPB was responsible for conducting the scientific survey and tagging for Atlantic halibut at 8 stations (21, 23, 24, 26, 109, 123, 124, and 125) (Figure 1). Five harvesters took part in the survey. Each station was allocated 480 kg of halibut to be landed, with a total of 3840 kg of halibut to be caught under the scientific permit (after completion of scientific station). No bycatch was to be landed. After each harvester completed their scientific station, they had the option to quit fishing and not pursue the remainder of their quota, or they could continue fishing at a location of their choosing to catch their quota. Quota from the participants who chose to quit and not fish was transferred to the other participating harvesters.

Despite weather and halibut season openings decreasing the potential days to complete their tagging sites, all harvesters were able complete their scientific sampling trips by October 5th.

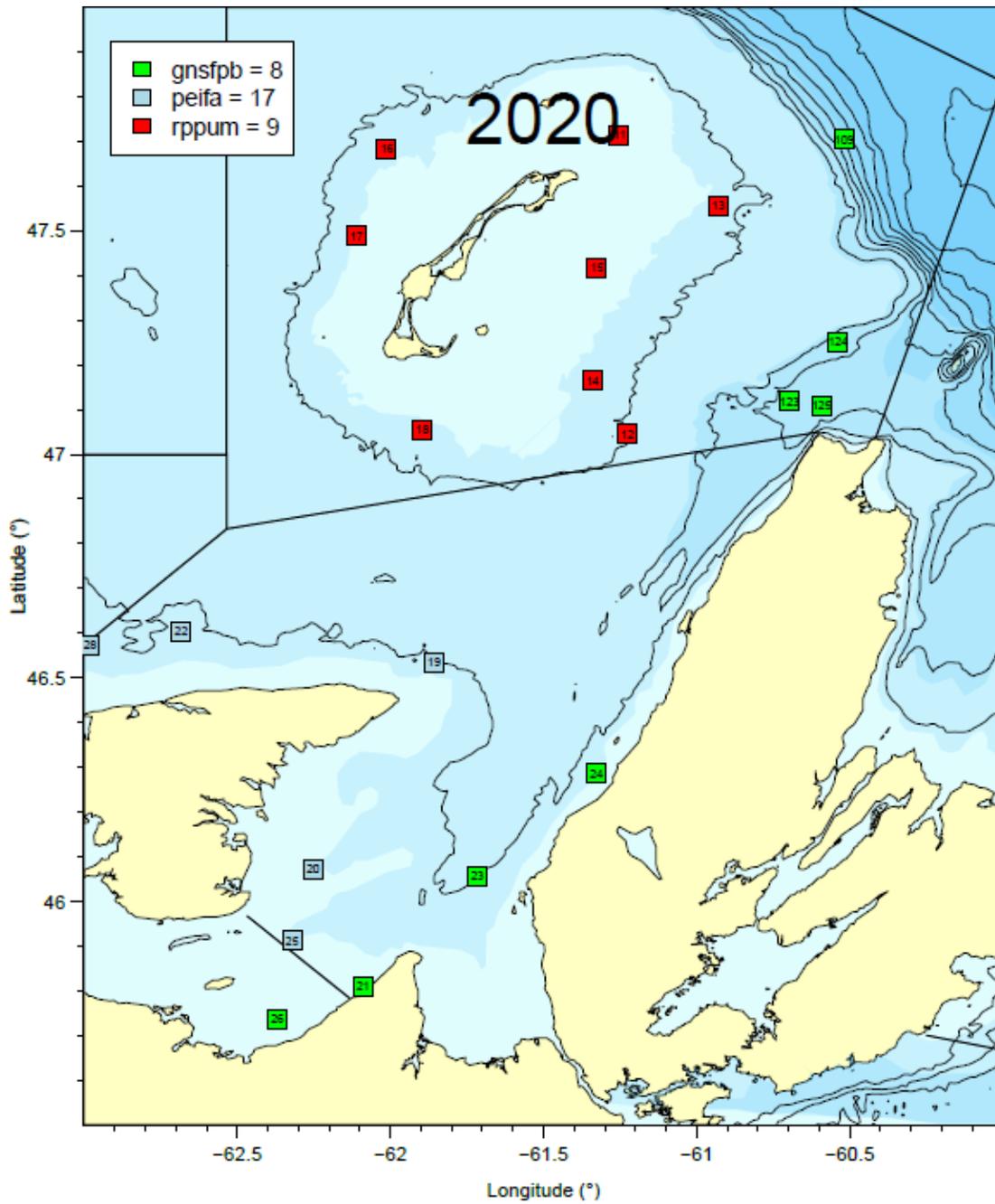


Figure 1. Map of 2020 sampling stations for the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. GNSFPB sites are indicated by the green squares; 26, 21, 23, 24, 123, 124, 125, 109.

Catch and Cost statistics

Each of the five harvesters went fishing at their assigned scientific site(s). Two participating harvesters decided not to continue fishing to try and catch their quota on supplementary trips. Two of the five harvesters went fishing on other occasions, with varying levels of success. Participants have until May 14th, 2021 to catch their quota.

Tables 1 and 2 display results from scientific tagging, and landings from additional quota trips. Tables 3, 4, 5 provide a summary of the project related transactions and overall costs.

Table 1. Statistics for 2020 scientific sampling sites.

Name	Site #	Soak time	Halibut retained	Tagged
Andrew Bourgeois	123	5 h	0	9
Andrew Bourgeois	124	5 h	0	0
Duane Boudreau	21	5 h	0	0
Duane Boudreau	23	5 h	0	0
Cole MacLellan	109	5 h	0	0
Cole MacLellan	125	5 h	0	18
Charles Elliot	26	5 h	0	0
Howie Beaton	24	5 h	0	0
Total			0	27

Table 2. Summary of results from the supplementary fishing activities. The quota was adjusted throughout as necessary.

Name	Original quota (kg)	Adjusted quota (kg)	Landed (Kg)	Dressed
Andrew Bourgeois	960	1280	315.8	Yes
Cole Maclellan	960	1280	213.3	Yes
Duane Boudreau	960	1280		
Charles Elliot	480	-	-	-
Howie Beaton	480	-	-	-
Total	3840	3840	529.1	-

There were 27 Atlantic halibut tagged across two scientific stations in 2020; station 123 (9) and station 125 (18). There were 0 Atlantic halibut tagged at stations: 21, 23, 24, 26, 109 and 124. On additional fishing trips (after science station completion), a total of 529.1 kg of Atlantic halibut was landed as of December 1st, 2020. The total allotted quota was 3840 kg, so 3310.9 kg of halibut was left in the water as of December 1st, 2020. The GNSFPB intends for the remaining quota to be caught in the Spring. This remaining quota must be caught by May 14th, 2021. There was no by-catch retained on scientific and additional fishing trips. There were no interactions with species at risk and SARA logs will be submitted on behalf of the project.

Table 3. All financial transactions for harvesters and GNSFPB.

	Share of Stations	Harvester Fees Paid	GNSFPB Reimbursed	GNSFPB Paid	GNSFPB Observer Costs
Andrew Bourgeois	2	\$1000	-	-	-
Cole Maclellan	2	\$1000	-	-	-
Charles Elliot	1	\$500	\$500	\$2000	-
Duane Boudreau	2	\$1000	-	-	-
Howie Beaton	1	\$500	\$500	\$2000	-
<i>GNSFPB</i>	-	-	-	-	<i>1194.77</i>
Total	8	\$4000	\$1000	\$4000	\$ 1194.77

Table 4: Summary of use of harvester funds collected by the GNSFPB

Transaction	\$ Amount	Explanation
Funds Collected	4000	- \$500 collected from harvesters per site, to cover 10% observer coverage
Funds Reimbursed	1000	- Reimbursed \$500 to Howie Beaton for observer fees - Reimbursed \$500 to Charles Elliot for observer fees
Observer Fee	1194.77	- GNSFPB used funds collected to pay for 1 trip observer coverage
<i>Funds Remaining</i>	<i>1805.23</i>	<i>- Remaining funds will be reimbursed to remaining participants</i>

Table 5: Summary of overall costs for Fleet Planning Board

Transaction	\$ Amount	Explanation
GNSFPB Paid	4000	- GNSFPB paid \$2000 per site out of pocket to Howie Beaton - GNSFPB paid \$2000 per site out of pocket to Charles Elliot

Similar to the 2018 and 2019 protocol, only 10% observer coverage was required for the additional fishing trips. In order to share this cost fairly amongst all participants, the GNSFPB collected an initial fee of \$500 per scientific station (500*8= \$4000). The GNSFPB collected \$4000. The observer coverage cost \$1194.77. Two harvesters opted not to continue fishing, so they were reimbursed their \$500 observer fee. The other 3 harvesters who chose to fish their quotas will be reimbursed remaining funds after the 10% additional observer coverage is covered. The GNSFPB does not make a revenue from this project.

Review of the Fishery

A lot of work and time went into the coordination of this project and the ongoing issues that came up throughout it (i.e. licence amendments, coordination of tags/sampling kits, arranging observers, discussions with harvesters, etc.). There was no halibut caught at 6/8 of the scientific sites. Two additional quota trips were completed by December 2020 and there is 3310.9 kg of quota remaining to

be caught by May 14th, 2021. The GNSFPB would like to have more say in choosing the scientific sites next year so that more tagging can be done.

DFO was helpful with this project, working closely with the GNSFPB and responding quickly when requests were made (i.e for licence amendments). DFO ensured that the sampling kits arrived in time allowing the observer company enough tags to follow the protocol. There were numerous requests from GNSFPB as well as Javitech for these kits ahead of time. DFO fishery officers were informed of this project, and there were no issues.

Acknowledgements

The Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board would like to thank all of the harvester participants who contributed their time and resources to get this project done in coordinated and committed manner; Duane Boudreau, Howie Beaton, Cole MacLellan, Andrew Bourgeois and Charles Elliot. Further thanks to Leonard LeBlanc, Victoria Cullen, and Stephanie Delorey for their efforts in liaising between harvesters, other associations, DFO, and observer companies throughout this project. We also would like to acknowledge the timely help we received from DFO's Daniel Lapierre and Mathieu Desgagne.

We note that the above information is simply a summary of the Gulf NS scientific stations and the costs for the GNSFPB. The Scientific Fishery for Atlantic Halibut is a Gulf-wide tagging program that encompasses the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence. Our regional results are submitted to DFO in Mont Joli for continued analysis.

DFO Project Evaluation

- 1) Did the intended activities take place within scope, within budget?
 - a. The project costs were within budget.
 - b. The activities were completed within the scope identified. Scientific tagging sites were completed October 5th. There is remaining quota participants intend to catch in the Spring by the May 14th, 2021 deadline.
- 2) Were the resources allocated efficiently and effectively, or given the results would a different allocation have been more appropriate, and if so will be considered for any potential future projects as applicable?
 - a. The allocation per site helped to retain harvesters to continue finishing. More allocation in the future will help to increase and maintain participation.
 - b. Bycatch should have been landed to help with costs and eliminate waste from bycatch.
- 3) Were the milestones achieved?
 - a. The fishery, scientific and supplementary sites, were sampled within their expected timeframe. Scientific sites were completed by October 5th, 2020.
- 4) Were the deliverables of the project delivered?
 - a. The deliverables were delivered (i.e. all scientific sites were sampled and a small amount of tagging was done). Report was sent to DFO.
- 5) Did the collaboration achieve its purpose?
 - a. The GNSFPB questions whether the collaboration achieved its purpose. According to the protocol, "The objective of the 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. This activity takes the form of a random stratified longline survey, as well as the tagging of Atlantic halibut of all size distributed throughout the Gulf of St. Lawrence." There were so few halibut caught during the scientific sampling in the Gulf of Nova Scotia that there was very little data collected on the abundance, distribution, and biology of Atlantic halibut in this area.
- 6) Were there any difficulties encountered within the performance of the project and if so, how were they managed to achieve resolution?
 - a. The scientific tagging sites were completed within the time frame of August 27th and October 12th, 2020. There were no issues acquiring observers for those trips. Two harvesters decided to not go fishing for their quota: after catching nothing at the scientific stations. Some others tried one trip before finishing for the season. The costs of fishing were high relative to the quota provided. We used the same observer company as in 2017, 2018, and 2019 so the observers and managers were familiar with the demands (location, timing, requirements) of this project.

As of December 2020, we have 3310.9 kg of quota remaining in the water and our participants intend to catch the remaining quota in the spring of 2021 by May 14th, 2021. Due to weather and low landings, our participants were not able to catch their quotas in the Fall. Allowing the remaining quota to be caught in

the new year will allow our remaining quota to be caught and our participants be compensated for their time and efforts.