



Spring has arrived!



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# The Coastal Current

A Quarterly Newsletter Keeping You Current on Marine Protected Areas Issues in Your Community

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## Gilbert Bay MPA Protects the Unique Golden Cod

Gilbert Bay, was designated as a Marine Protected Area on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005 to protect a genetically-distinct population of Atlantic cod that lives there, as well as the ecosystem that supports them. These cod have been nicknamed “Golden Cod” because of the reddish-brown skin colour that results from their carotenoid-rich diet of invertebrates.



*The Golden Cod of Gilbert Bay*

Locals have known for some time that there was something different about the cod in Gilbert Bay. In 1996, research conducted by Memorial University and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans proved that the Gilbert Bay cod are indeed both genetically and geographically distinct.

The communities of Port Hope Simpson and William’s Harbour approached DFO about protecting the fish, which were being fished heavily by both commercial and recreational fishermen at the time. This consultation eventually resulted in the formation of the Gilbert Bay Steering Committee which has guided the development and management of the Marine Protected Area.

Gilbert Bay has been the site of much scientific work, involving scientists from DFO and Memorial University as well as local people. Ongoing research within the MPA includes the tagging and tracking of Gilbert Bay cod, a yearly study of larval cod and the yearly profiling of the water column.



*Dr. John Green tags a Gilbert Bay cod.*

Another ongoing program is the monitoring of William’s Harbour’s sewage outfall, to ensure that its effluent does not have a negative impact on the MPA.

In addition to the ongoing research, there were also several short-term projects conducted in Gilbert Bay this past summer. One of these was the ground-truthing of Gilbert Bay’s 2002 multi-beam survey.



*Redge Russell watches as Allison Copeland and Liuming Hu examine a grab sample.*

This involved taking “grab” samples of the bottom to verify the results of the sonar survey and provide more detailed data about Gilbert Bay habitat.

Another project assessed the scallop fishery in Gilbert Bay by sampling catches from August to September on a commercial fishing vessel.



*Corrina Russell measures scallops*

Also this past summer, Gilbert Bay was one of the sites selected for an international study on gene flow in Orange-Footed Sea Cucumbers. Gilbert Bay was also included in a study that compared the genetics of Shorthorn Sculpin from various locations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The past year has been very busy and productive for the Gilbert Bay MPA. The Steering Committee is very proud of this, and hopeful that the momentum will carry through into next year.

For more information on the Gilbert Bay MPA, please visit: [www.gilbertbay.com](http://www.gilbertbay.com)

Article and photos by Wayne Russell

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The MPA that Almost Was

Fourteen people gathered for a Regulatory Intent Workshop on the morning of March 7 in Northern Arm. The plan was to discuss in detail conservation goals and management actions for the proposed Tickles Marine Protected Area... but that discussion never happened.

After a brief welcome from Facilitator David Taylor of DGT Consulting, Hazen Chippett took the floor to announce a decision made by the Leading Tickles and Glovers Harbour Fishermen's Committee representatives earlier in the week. Hazen told us that they had come to the understanding that the MPA did not have sufficient community support to go ahead. The fishermen's reps make up two thirds of the voting membership of the MPA Steering Committee and their support has always been crucial to the success of the MPA initiative.

Hazen explained that there was a general feeling that DFO wanted to go further than Leading Tickles and Glovers Harbour fishers were comfortable with. He outlined the closures and management actions already in effect in the Area of Interest, and said that these had not caused any problem. However, further actions, especially possible restrictions on fishing pelagics in Glovers Harbour, were a cause of concern.

Hazen added that there was also a fear that once the MPA was created, a new government, a new minister or any change of top-level bureaucrats might mean unforeseen changes to the MPA program that would affect all MPAs, including the Tickles.

As the discussion opened to the floor, some fishers said they felt that the proposed MPA was too large. Others felt that if people fully understood the Oceans Act and the MPA concept, they would not be so fearful. FFAW representative Will Reid offered the opinion that if they had another year to address community concerns, opinion might turn around.

Hazen said that the MPA development process had been worthwhile for Leading Tickles and would have lasting benefits. He felt that awareness of conservation had been raised and fishers in the area had established good relationships with the DFO personnel they had worked with over the years. He also expressed the opinion that the Fishermen's Committee would probably keep the closed lobster areas for the benefit of lobster stocks.

Annette Power, Head of Oceans Programs at DFO, acknowledged that it was disappointing to arrive at this point after such a long process,

but she agreed that the Fishers' Committee reps were right not to proceed without community backing. She added that DFO staff had always seen themselves as involved in a collaborative process with the Leading Tickles proponents rather than engaged in a negotiation with them.

She went on to say that as the initiative to create the MPA with the proposed 100-fathom boundary had come from the community, and the protection of eel grass beds in Glovers Harbour had been named as a conservation goal several years ago, she wondered why the project had lost support, and why it had taken so long to realize that the MPA was not what people wanted.

The Leading Tickles representatives agreed to meet with DFO staff soon to discuss these issues so that MPA program staff can learn as much as possible from the experience. Everyone agreed that the MPA program is very worthwhile and that the decision not to designate the Tickles Marine Protected Area should in no way be seen as a failure of the MPA program.

The meeting adjourned early, with no hard feelings, but perhaps with some regrets for the MPA that almost was.

MPA Science Workshop in St. John's, March 19-20



Left to right, both photos: Janice Ryan, Jennifer Janes, Christa Ramsay, Danny Ings, Wade Turner, Ken Lane, Doug Churchill, Harvey Jarvis and Hazen Chippett were just some of the fishers, scientists, DFO personnel, union officials and community reps that met in St. John's to discuss science priorities for the coming year.