



The Coastal Current

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

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A New Marine Protected Area for Newfoundland and Labrador

The wheels are in motion to create six new MPAs in Canada over the next few years, one of them possibly located in Newfoundland and Labrador waters.

The area to be protected is yet to be identified by DFO, which is presently consulting with the fishing industry, and with representatives from academia, the oil and gas industry and non-governmental organizations as well as several departments of the federal and provincial governments.

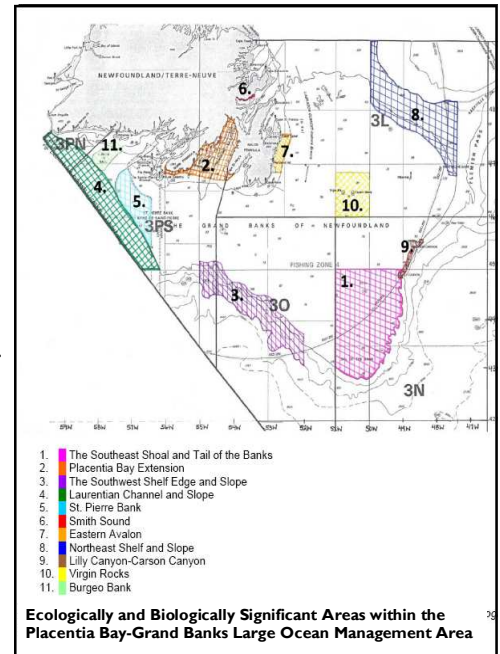
So far, five possible sites are under consideration, narrowed down from eleven EBSA's—Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas—that have already been identified by DFO Science. Most of the five contenders are offshore sites, but the development of the new

MPA will be very similar to the process used in Eastport and Gilbert Bay.

The chosen site will be identified as an "Area of Interest" (or AOI) by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada by March 31st of this year. Shortly afterwards, a Steering Committee will be set up to oversee the development process. It is hoped that the new MPA will be established in 2012.

The illustration to the right shows all eleven EBSA's within the PB-GB LOMA. The proposed MPA will likely encompass

a portion (not necessarily all) of the chosen EBSA.



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Way to Go, St. Brendan's!

Lobster harvesters on the Eastport Peninsula were happy to hear that fishers on nearby St. Brendan's (Cottle's Island) have decided to create a small lobster conservation area known locally as Ashes Island.

On CBC's Land and Sea program, St. Brendan's fisherman Paddy Kelly said that the success of the Eastport MPAs was one of the factors that sparked discussion among local fishers about trying something similar in their area.



The St. Brendan's lobster conservation area isn't an MPA, but a closure done by agreement among fishers—an independent and straightforward way to get something happening quickly.

Fishers on the Eastport MPA Steering Committee believe that if lobster fishers around the province would all set up conservation areas, the long-term benefits could be considerable. Hopefully, benefits stemming from the Eastport MPA and St. Brendan's Ashes Island will encourage more fishing communities to get involved in local stewardship.

Congratulations and Good Luck to the St. Brendan's initiative!

We're on the Web!



www.gilbertbay.com



www.eastportmpa.com

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Cod Monitoring Program Results from Gilbert Bay MPA

At a Gilbert Bay Steering Committee meeting on October 28 of last year, Dr. John Green of Memorial University provided an update on the cod monitoring program. In June of 2008, in collaboration with the Labrador Métis Nation, hydrophone receivers were deployed to track the movements of specially-tagged Golden Cod.

Dr. Green and Corey Morris of DFO, in collaboration with Wayne Russell, retrieved hydrophones from inshore sites in Gilbert Bay from October 14 -17, downloaded data, and redeployed the hydrophones. Offshore hydrophones were retrieved with the assistance of Clifford Russell. The data was downloaded, and the equipment returned to the LMN office in Port Hope Simpson.

Dr. Green stated that all in all it was a very successful trip; thanks to the excellent weather, and the assistance of Clifford Russell. He also noted that Mr. Russell (Senior) had provided much-appreciated assistance to the effort. Corey Morris added that there has been a good team effort by the Labrador Métis Nation, Memorial University and DFO. Data from the hydrophones indicated that all 23 fish

tagged with LMN-coded tags in June were still alive and moving within Gilbert Bay. Most were back in the Shinneys. All but three tagged fish had moved out of the Shinneys into the outer areas of the bay during the summer. Several were detected in Alexis Bay.

Out of the four fish tagged and released offshore, one was still located at the offshore hydrophone site but it is not known whether the fish is still alive or not. The whereabouts of the other three fish released offshore (Spear Point) are not known. Dr. Green asked that fishers be reminded to keep an eye out for these tags inside fish when they are cleaning their catch.

Standardized fishing effort data collected since 1998 indicate decreases in the number of Gilbert Bay cod in recent years. In 1998 the catch per unit effort was 6.6 fish per hour. In 2008 the catch per unit effort was 2 fish per hour. 1998 & 1999 were very good for commercial fishing, but the catch rate dropped in 2000. Strong year classes improved catch rates between 2002 and 2005, but rates have declined since then.

Length frequency data shows

that the proportion of commercial-sized fish in the population is increasing. Of the fish that are available, approximately 30 % of them are larger than 50 cm. Most fish being caught are large because large fish are more likely to migrate from the inner parts of Gilbert Bay to areas where fishing occurs, and also because the size-selectivity of commercial fishing gear targets fish larger than 50 cm.

In Gilbert Bay, several years of poor recruitment have resulted in relatively fewer fish at small sizes than in previous years. A potential problem, if there continues to be poor recruitment, is that the existing large mature breeding fish will leave the system due to natural or fishing mortality, and there will be few fish in the population to replace them.

Given that the Gilbert Bay Golden Cod stocks may be facing some recruitment challenges in coming years, our efforts to conserve and protect them, and the science that contributes to our management planning are clearly more important than ever.

