



Spring is here—Brrrrrrrr!

The Coastal Current

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

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DFO Conservation and Protection Looking Out for Eastport MPAs

Over the past several years, the Eastport MPAs Steering Committee has identified some concerns with respect to lobster poaching during the spring and summer months when tourism is at its peak. Early fall was also identified as a potentially vulnerable time because lobster tagging is taking place at the same time as the recreational cod fishery.

Last year, DFO Oceans Division and the Conservation and Protection Division (C&P) signed a Service Level Agreement to arrange extra patrols for the Eastport MPAs during these identified periods.

Patrol Activity and Results

The monitoring of the Round Island and Duck Islands MPAs began in early spring when the lobster fishery began, and continued into the fall.

Glovertown officers normally patrol the area during their regular patrols. Dedicated patrols by officers from Glovertown, Clarenville and Bonavista officers were also conducted during peak activity periods and during the crab, lobster, capelin and cod fisheries (recreational and commercial).

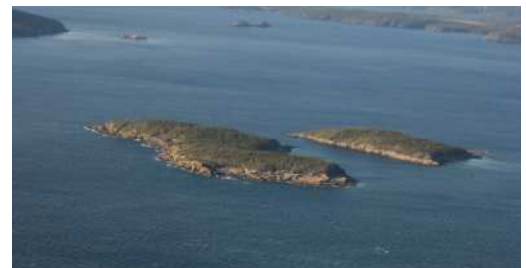
Four extra boat patrols were conducted in the MPA areas by officers from the Clarenville Detachment. These patrols added the surprise element to the surveillance of the MPA areas and in other fisheries being policed.

Covert surveillance was conducted on Duck Islands during a special patrol to deal with reported illegal cod fishing. Covert and aerial surveillance was also carried out on both areas during the report period.

At the recent Eastport MPAs Steering Committee meeting on March 12, Fishery Officer Ray Sheppard tabled the C&P report for last year's operations, and was pleased to report that no illegal activities were observed by officers during 15 boat patrols, six surveillance flights and two covert patrols.

The increased surveillance was noticed by local boaters, which is a good thing, not just for the MPAs, but also for commercial fishers generally, as their interests are also well-served by a visible C&P presence.

We appreciate C&P's efforts to protect the investment Eastport Peninsula fishers have made to support and conserve lobster stocks and are hoping that this program will be able to continue.



Aerial views of Round Island and Duck Islands MPAs during 2008 surveillance flights

DFO photos

Eastport MPAs Steering Committee Looking to the Future

At an Eastport MPAs Steering Committee meeting on March 12, members heard encouraging news from MPA Biologist Jennifer Janes. Her recently published report, (*Canadian Technical Report of Fisheries*

and Aquatic Sciences 2832) analyzes tagging data collected in and directly adjacent to the MPAs. The report concludes that there are more large lobsters in the MPAs and that overall, the average size of

individuals has increased—including those egg-bearing females so important to the future of our lobster stocks. Jennifer points out that although the protection of the MPAs has contributed to the

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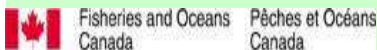
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Looking to the Future *continued*

benefits both inside the MPAs and in the adjacent open areas, they were not the only factor. Conservation measures such as V-notching started by local harvesters before the MPAs came into effect may also have contributed to the benefits.

There was other good news to share at the meeting. Jan Negrijn, who some may remember as the host of *The Twine Loft* TV program, has a five-year contract to operate boat tours out of Terra Nova National Park in Newman

Sound. Jan is a conservation-minded former fisherman who looks forward to contributing to our monitoring and research activities. His educational tours will run from May to October.

Now the Steering Committee is looking to the future with two priorities in mind: First, we need to continue our research to find out where the lobster larvae generated in the MPAs settle. And secondly, the committee is looking at ways to extend our conservation awareness activities to a wider public audience.



Egg-bearing mama lobsters thrive in the Eastport MPAs *VH Photo*

Conservation and Protection in Gilbert Bay MPA

Earlier this year, Fishery Officer Carl Bradley of the Goose Bay Detachment, St. Lewis office, submitted a report on Conservation and Protection operations in the Gilbert Bay Marine Protected Area. Officer Bradley and fellow officer Brad Pye were assisted by seasonal marine guardians Larry Rumboldt and Gary Bolger. Officer Bradley also noted that C&P enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the Labrador Métis Aboriginal Fishery Guardians, Provincial Conservation Officers and Inland Fisheries Enforcement Program Officers. He added that cooperation with these agencies resulted in cost savings and efficiencies.

Officer Brad Pye is a member of the Gilbert Bay MPA Steering Committee, so the officers have close contact with the activities and issues concerning the MPA. They have helped the committee ensure that the various regulations are accurately reflected on new signage to indicate the outer boundaries and different zones within the MPA. They have also offered the use of DFO patrol boats and officers to help erect the Gilbert Bay MPA signs.

Patrols

Small boat patrols were done out of St. Lewis, Port Hope Simpson and Charlottetown, using DFO's 21 ft Ocean Fisher and 27 ft Manta Ray patrol boats. Officers also used the Labrador Métis Nation Guardian Program's Ocean Fisher vessel based at Port Hope Simpson. Vessel patrols started in late May and continued until December 5th. Windy weather prevented a normal freeze-up in most bays, so conditions weren't safe for snowmobile patrols until mid-January; the first snowmobile patrol to the MPA was conducted from Charlottetown on January 22nd.

Operational work plans determined that officers would concentrate their efforts in the MPA during the busy spring and summer season, with the goal of conducting at least one vessel patrol per week.



LMN's Ocean Fisher patrol boat on a frosty Labrador morning *W. Russell Photo*

All together, there were 29 directed vessel patrols and three aircraft surveillance flights conducted in the MPA since April 2008. There were also vessel patrols in portions of the MPA as part of the regular monitoring of Atlantic cod and various subsistence fisheries. A total of 244 officer hours were directed towards all MPA activities.

Observations

Officer Bradley reports that there was very limited activity detected in the MPA this past summer. There were vessel sightings and checks on boats using the busy inside run from Alexis Bay to St. Michaels Bay, some scallop draggers and whelk fishers in the outer zones, boats angling for trout and char in coastal waters, berry pickers, hunters, and trappers. Approximately 20 vessels and two snowmobiles were inspected.

Officer Bradley was happy to report that no illegal activity was detected in the MPA during the report period, which he attributes to the increased C&P presence as well as patrols by other agencies, including the LMN Guardians.