

Canada-Quebec planning for the establishment of marine protected areas

Projects under study in the Estuary and the Northern Gulf of St. Lawrence

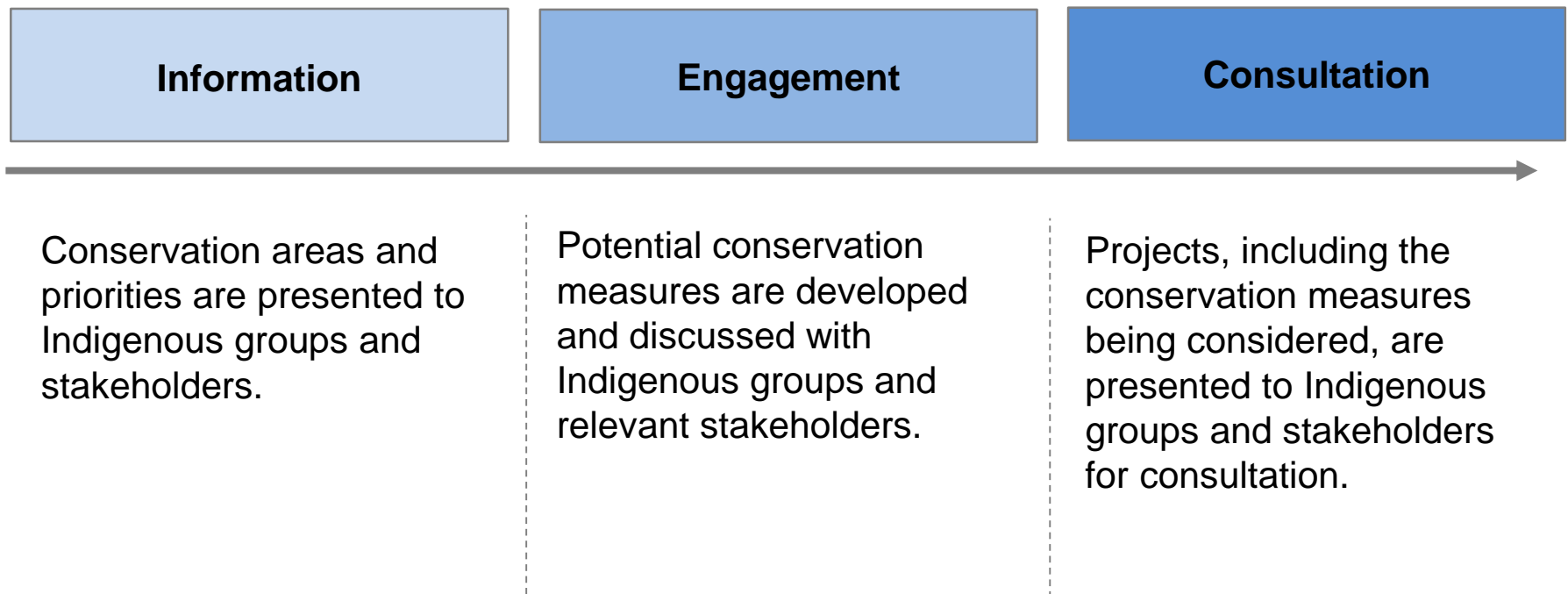
Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Inc.
November 18, 2020

Purpose of the session

- Inform you about Canada-Quebec collaboration, the joint projects for marine protected areas under study and the next steps.
- Listen to you and gather your initial comments.

Session background

It is part of a multi-step process:



Presentation outline

1. Background

2. Projects under study

- Northern Gulf of St. Lawrence
- St. Lawrence Estuary

3. Next steps

Part 1. Background

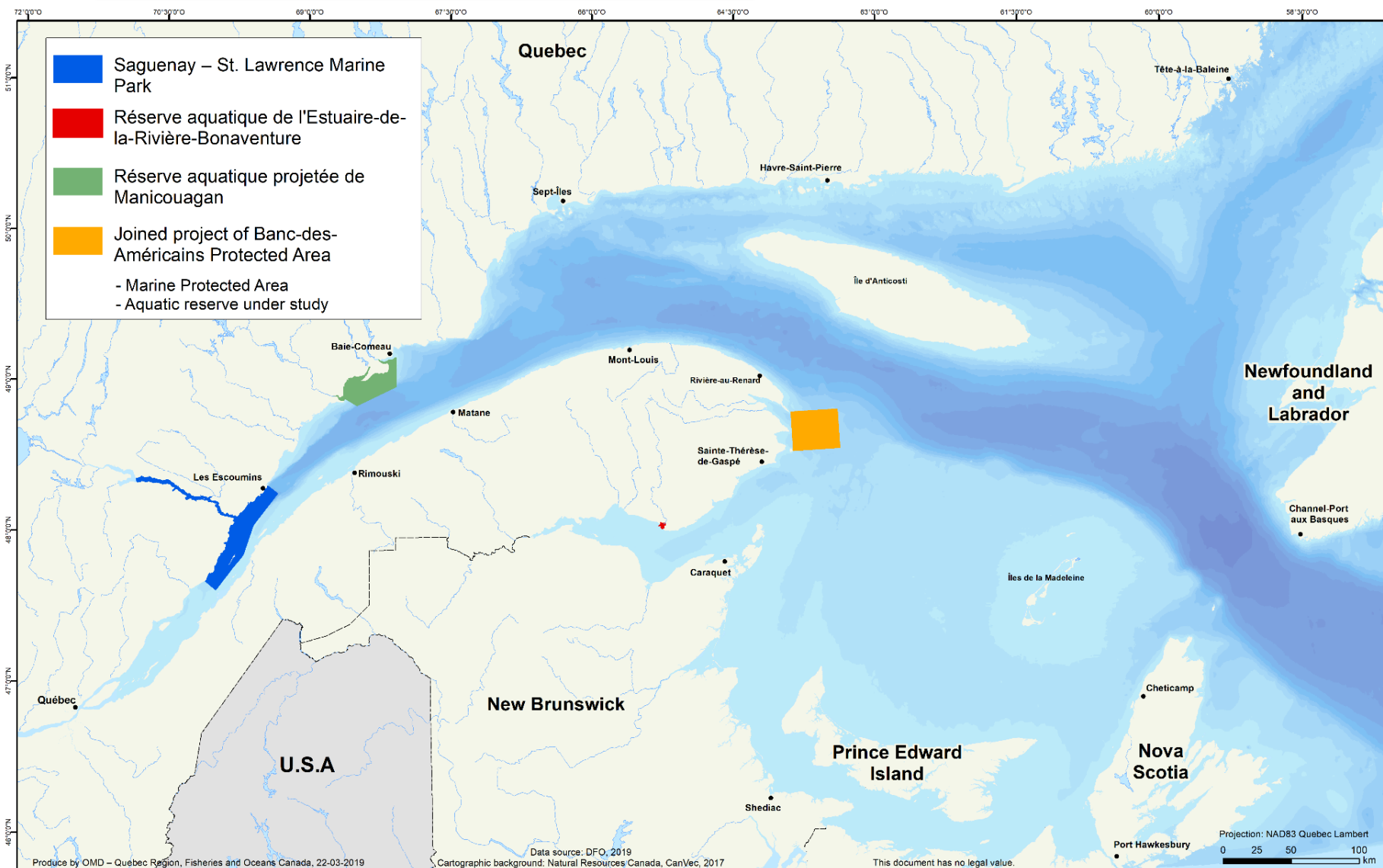


Government commitments

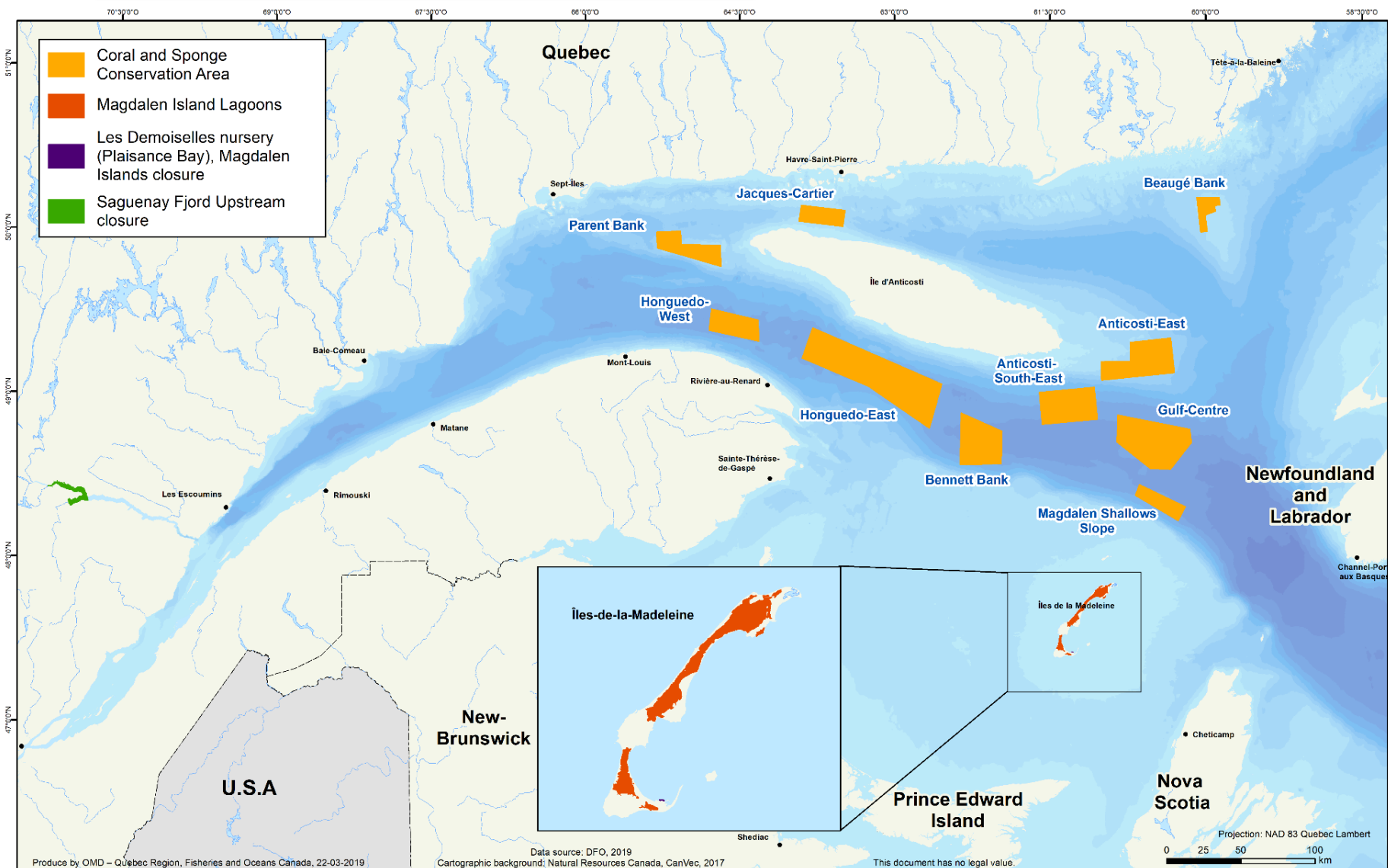
The Government of Canada **has met its 2020 target and now protects 13.8% of marine and coastal areas** through marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (marine refuges).

The Government of Canada has committed to new targets of **25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.**

Marine Protected Areas in Quebec



Marine refuges in Quebec



Canada-Quebec collaboration

In order to work together and in a complementary manner, the governments have signed the *Canada-Quebec Collaborative Agreement for the establishment of a marine protected areas network in Quebec* (March 2018).

This agreement:

- provides a collaborative framework for identifying, planning, establishing and monitoring marine protected areas on a joint basis;
- makes it possible to coordinate information, engagement and consultation processes;
- formalizes the Canada-Quebec Bilateral Group on Marine Protected Areas (GBAMP).

Joint planning

The governments of Quebec and Canada have developed a joint planning in order to reach their respective conservation targets:

Two new joint marine protected area projects are under study in the St. Lawrence, **one in the northern Gulf** and **one in the Estuary**.

The Îles-de-la-Madeleine project is the focus of a feasibility study and will be part of a separate information, engagement and consultation process.

Marine protected areas of Canada

Main tools:

- *Oceans Act* Marine Protected Areas (*Oceans Act*);
- Marine Wildlife Areas (*Canada Wildlife Act*);
- National Marine Conservation Areas (*Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*);
- National park with a marine component (*Canada National Parks Act*).

An MPA may also be designated by an ad hoc law (e.g., the Saguenay-Saint-Lawrence Marine Park)

Marine protected areas of Quebec

Main tools:

- Aquatic reserve (*Natural Heritage Conservation Act*);
- Threatened or vulnerable wildlife species habitat (*Act Respecting the Conservation and Development of Wildlife*);
- Natural settings designated by a plan (*Natural Heritage Conservation Act*);

An MPA may also be designated by an ad hoc law (e.g., the Saguenay-Saint-Lawrence Marine Park)

Canada's new standards

In any new federal MPA, certain activities will be prohibited from the outset:

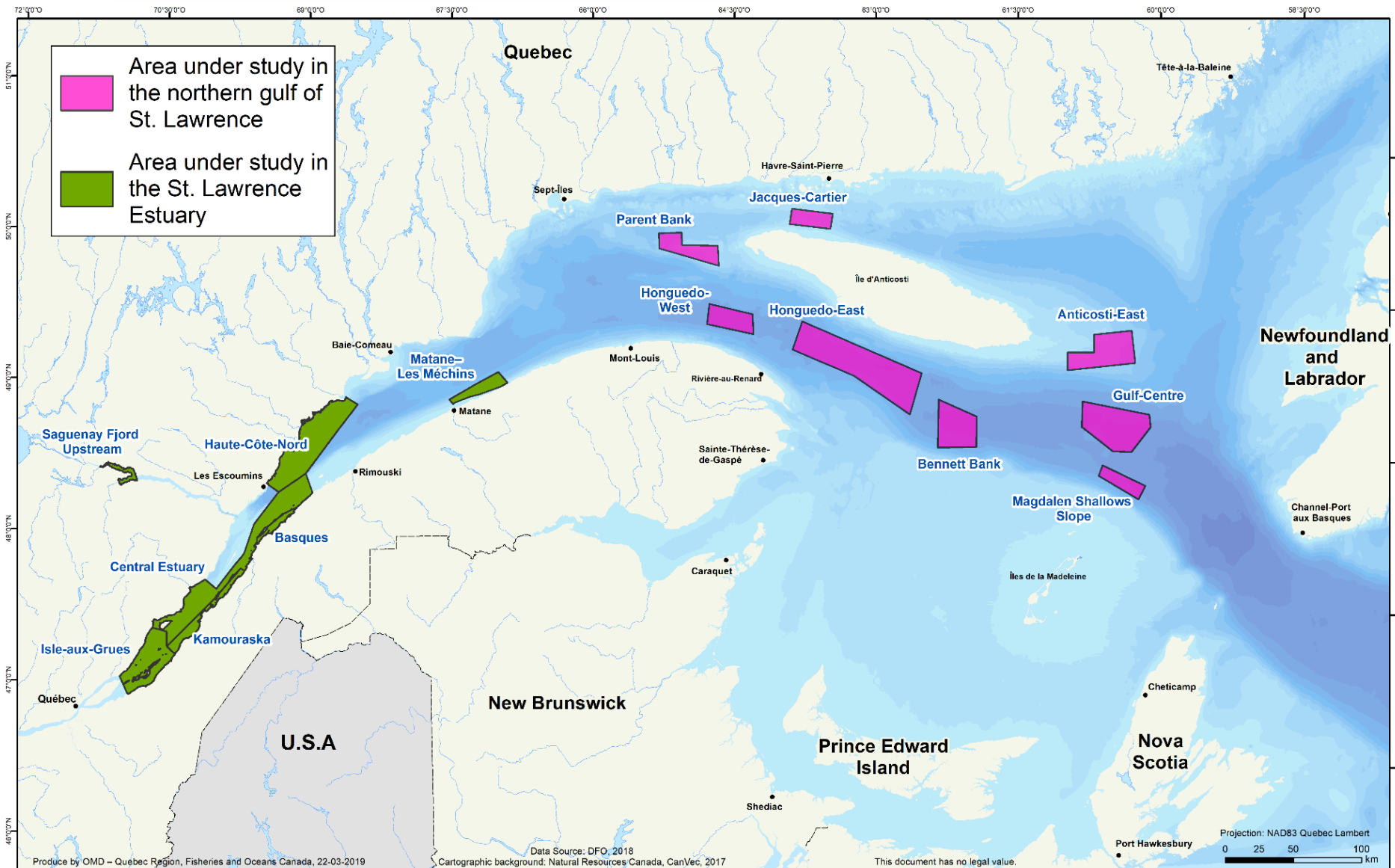
- oil and gas activities,
- mining,
- dumping,
- bottom trawling.

Other activities will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, based on the risk of these activities to the conservation priorities of the MPA.

Part 2. Projects under study



Projects under study



Projects under study

The two projects under study:

- Are the result of spatial analyses of important biological components in view of the conservation priorities determined by the GBAMP.
- Take into account the representativeness of the different habitat types found in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Northern Gulf of St. Lawrence Project

Conservation priorities

The project aims to increase the protection of **cold-water corals and sponges** and the **ecosystems** that support them, in some of the marine refuges established in December 2017.



Corals and sponges

Video



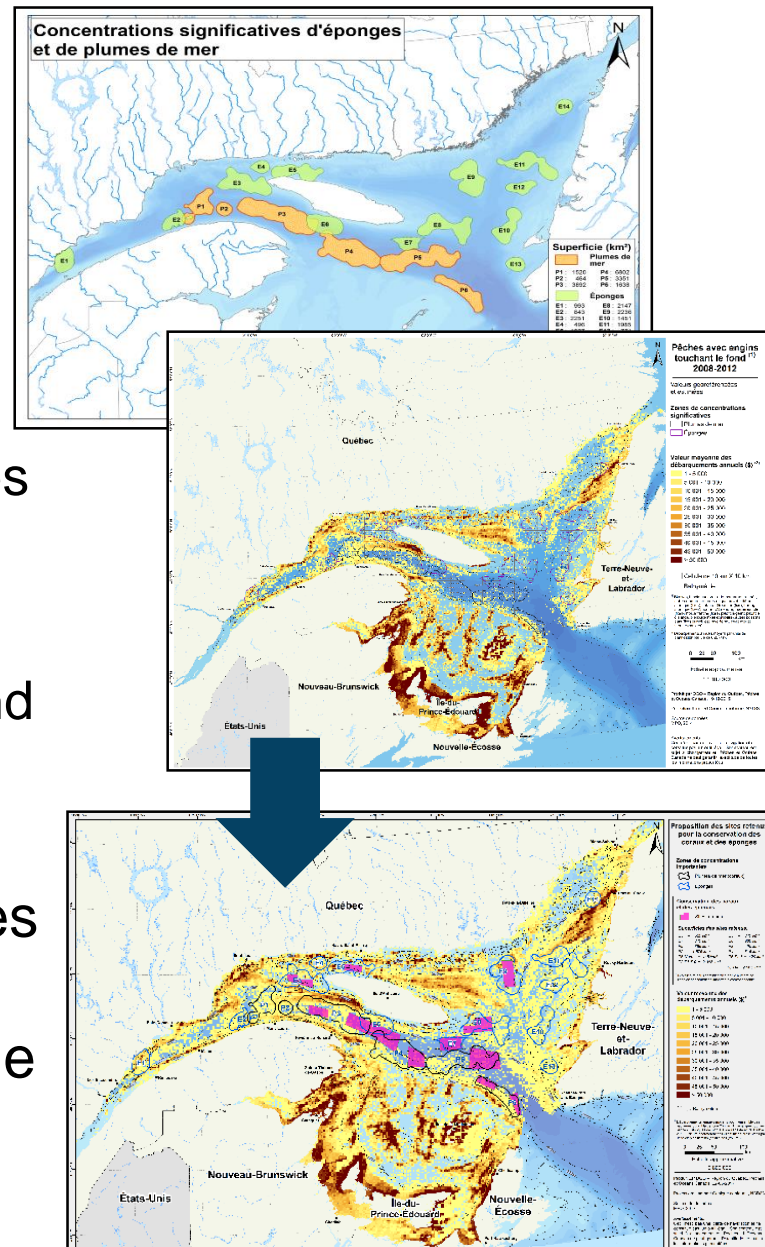
Corals and sponges

- Several species: hard (1) or soft (3) coral, sea pens (4), sponges (+).
- Are not very mobile and their growth is slow, making them vulnerable to seabed disturbance.
- Provide a number of other species with habitat that can be used for breeding, feeding and shelter.

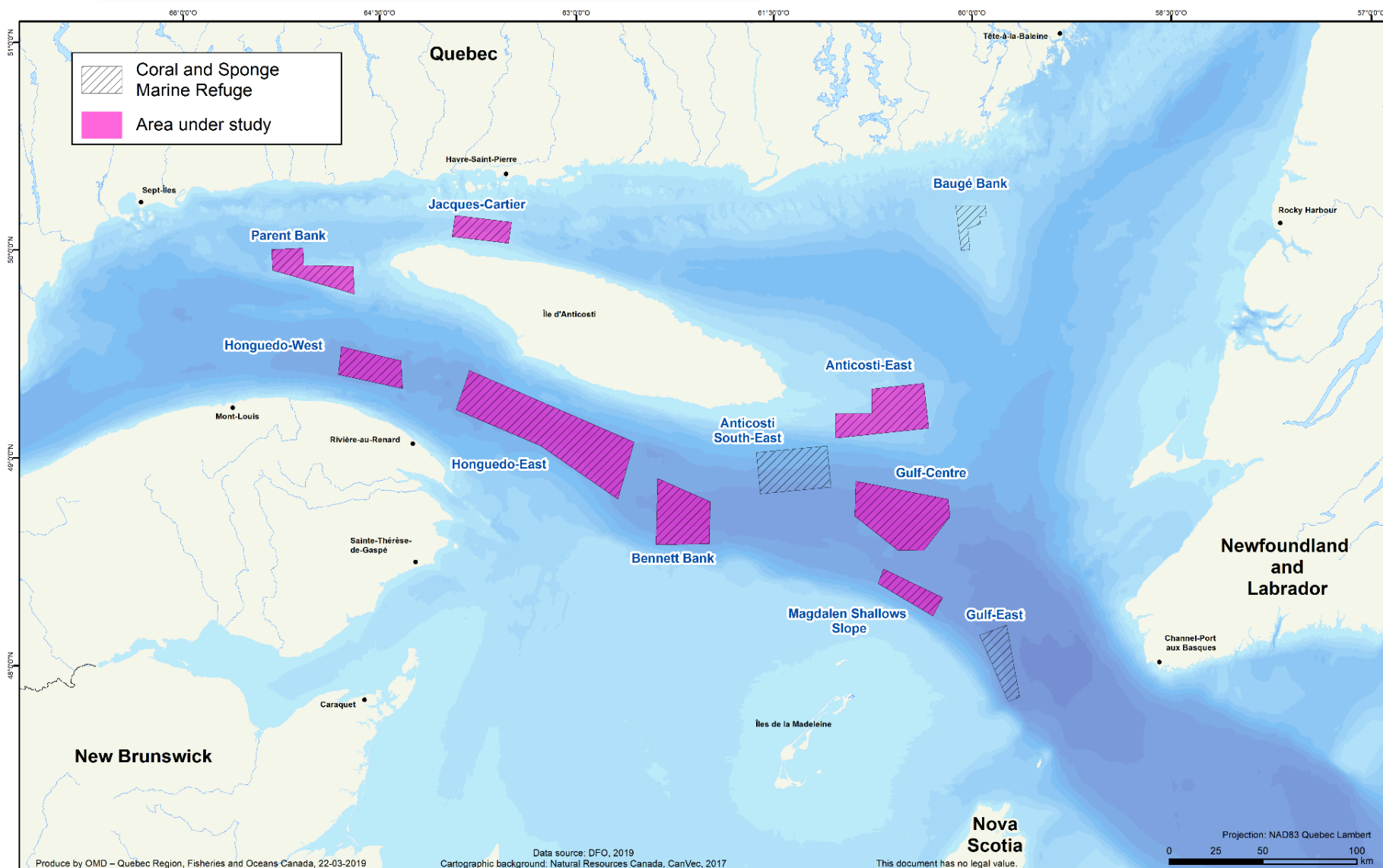


Choice of areas

- Marine refuges established in December 2017, taking into account:
 - ✓ Significant areas of corals and sponges and their ecological values;
 - ✓ Fishing activities;
 - ✓ Comments from Indigenous groups and stakeholders.
- The Canada-Quebec planning provides an opportunity to strengthen the protection of some of these areas while taking into account the representativeness of habitats.



Areas under study



Activities already prohibited

Fishing with the following gear :

- ✓ Bottom trawl
- ✓ Dredges
- ✓ Bottom seines
- ✓ Traps
- ✓ Bottom longlines
- ✓ Gillnets

These prohibitions would be maintained in a future marine protected area.

Activities to be prohibited or regulated

Certain activities that may harm cold water corals and sponges, as well as the ecosystems that support them, **would be prohibited :**

- ✓ Oil and gas exploration and exploitation;
- ✓ Mining;
- ✓ Dumping;
- ✓ Commercial or industrial production of electricity.

Other activities will be examined, including :

- ✓ Installation and maintenance of bottom contact structures;
- ✓ Anchoring of vessels;
- ✓ Scientific research.

St. Lawrence Estuary Project

Conservation priorities

Protecting **marine mammals at risk** and their **habitats**:

- Beluga whale
- Blue whale
- Fin whale

Protect **prey species** of these marine mammals at risk and their **habitats**:

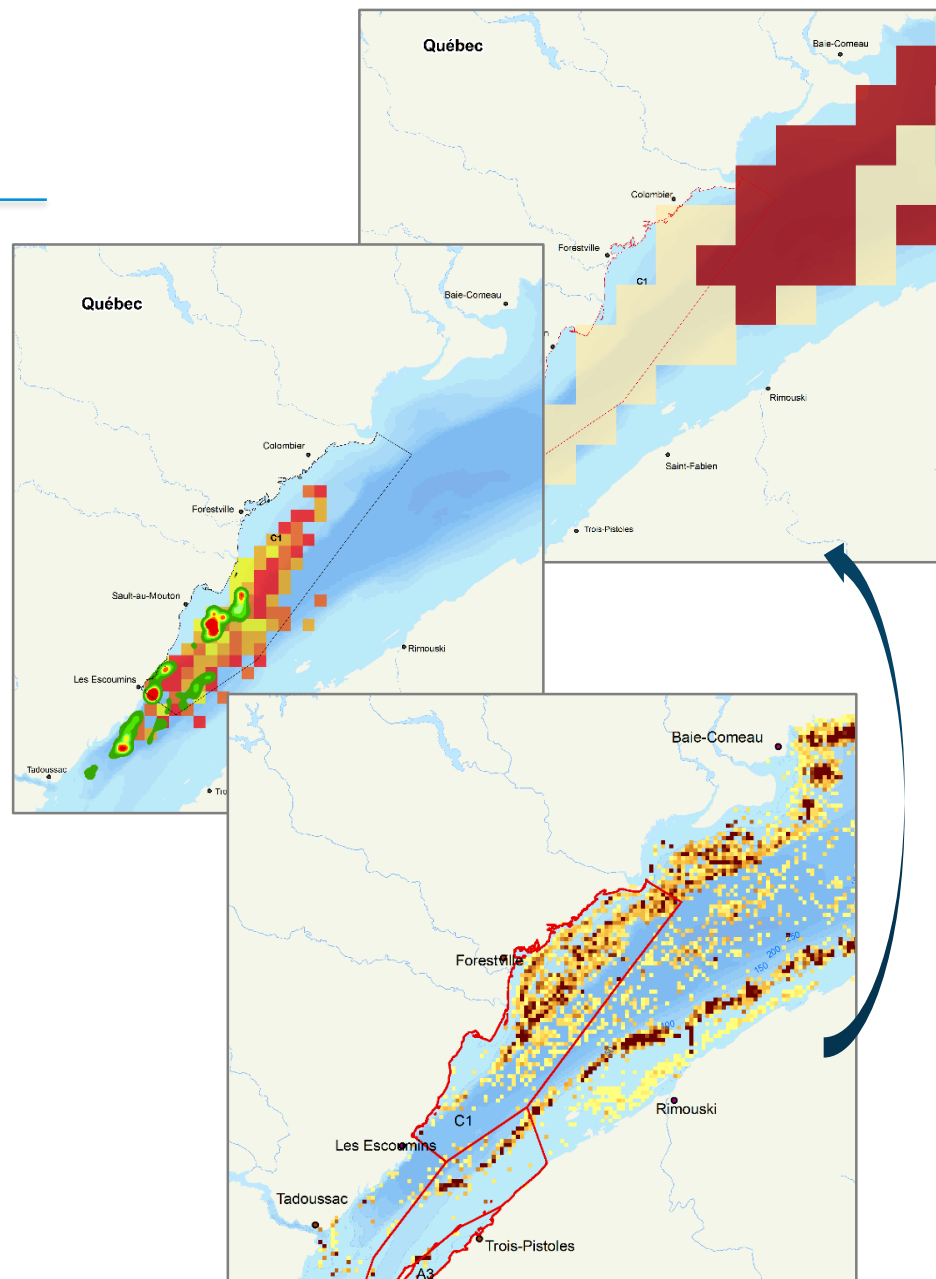
- Zooplankton: krill
- Fish: Atlantic herring, capelin, rainbow smelt, sand lance

Protecting **fish species in a precarious situation** and their **habitats**:

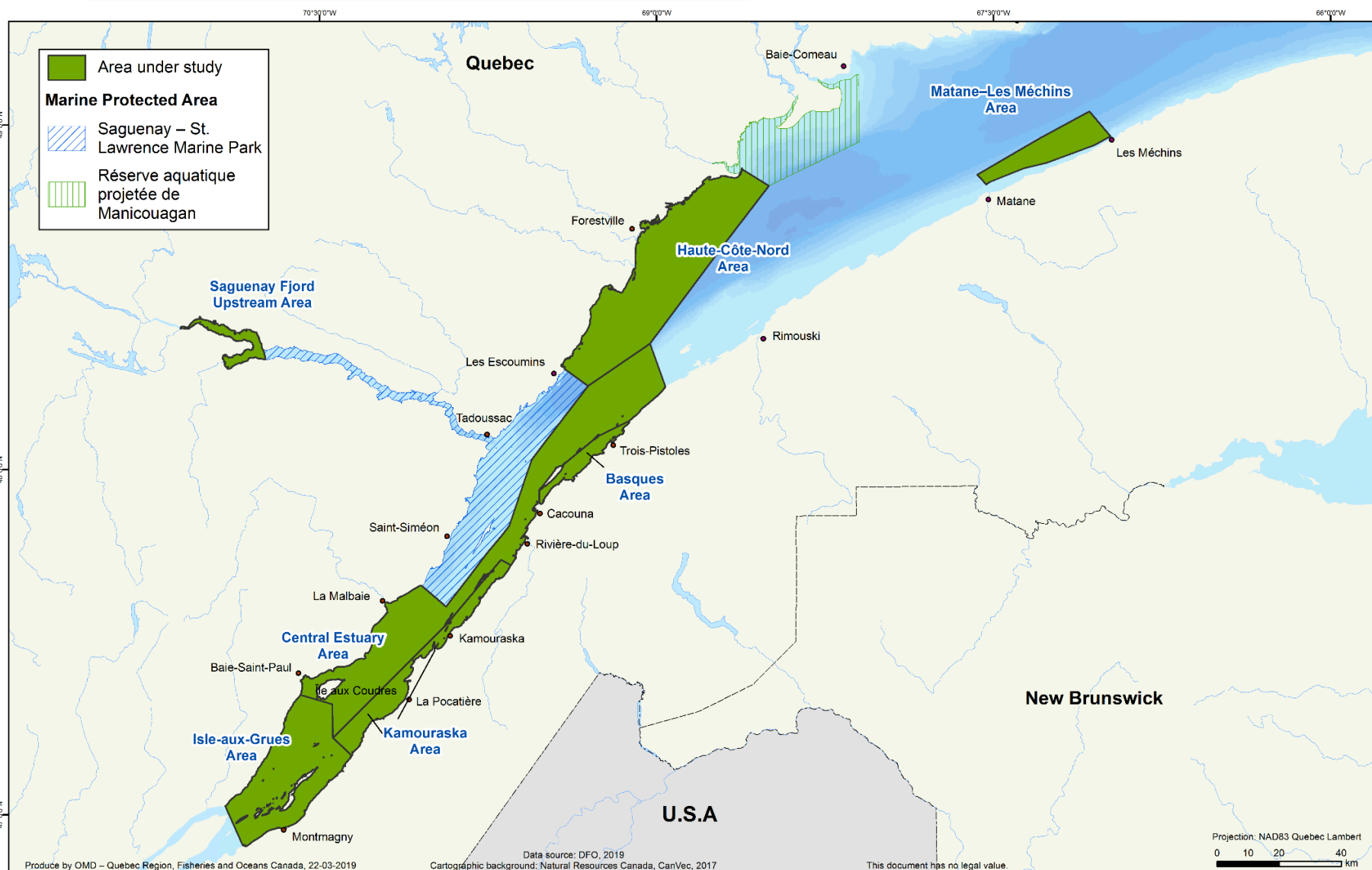
- Striped bass
- American shad
- Lake sturgeon
- Atlantic sturgeon

Choice of areas

- **Areas of ecological interest** were identified through an analysis of biological data (e.g. krill concentration area and blue whale sightings).
- The **analysis of human activities** (impacts and value) **is to be completed** and will be used to define the project.

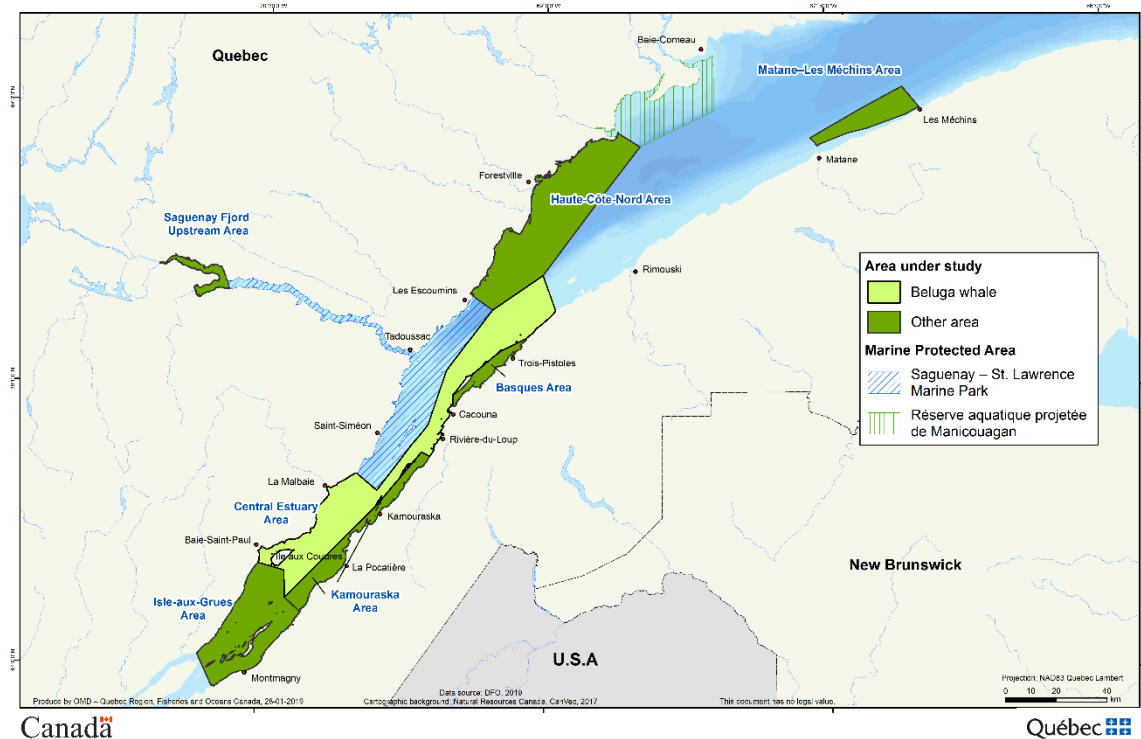


Areas under study



Central Estuary Area

Conservation priorities:
to protect
the beluga
whale and
beluga prey
species

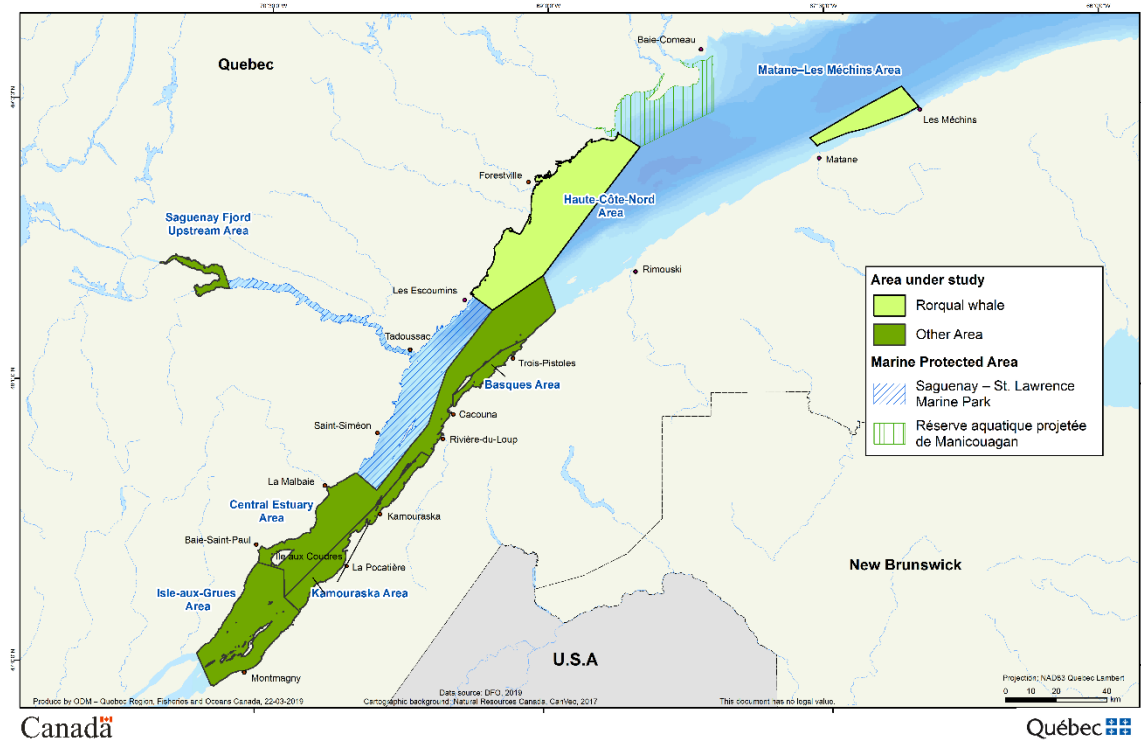


Includes the **critical beluga whale habitat** outside the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park and **an area around île aux Coudres**. Also an important reproduction and growth area for **several beluga prey species**.

Upper North Shore and Matane-Les Méchins Areas

Estuary project

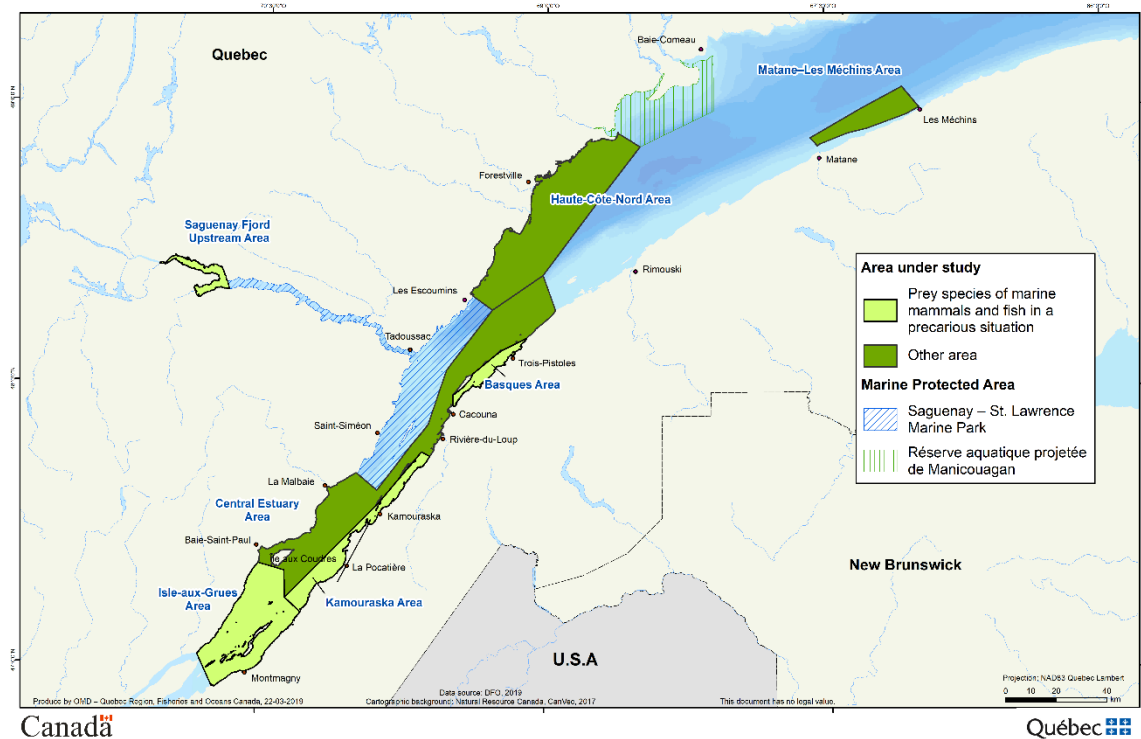
Conservation priorities:
to protect blue whales and fin whales



Cover **whale feeding areas** (concentration of krill and prey fish).

Four Other Areas

Conservation priorities:
to protect fish species in a precarious situation or beluga prey species



Includes important habitats for a number of fish species, particularly spawning grounds and nursery areas.

Activities to be examined

Activities that may harm marine mammals at risk, their habitats and prey, as well as fish species in a precarious situation and their habitats, particularly:

- ✓ Shipping and recreational boating;
- ✓ Marine observation activities;
- ✓ Fishing (mainly fishing that impacts prey species of marine mammals or habitat);
- ✓ Development activities (e.g. harbour construction and dredging);
- ✓ Scientific research.

Development of conservation measures

Conservation measures will be:

- developed **through engagement** with Indigenous groups and key stakeholders;
- **specific to the conservation priorities** of each of the identified areas (zoning);
- developed with a concern for **harmonization** with measures in existing marine protected areas.

Part 3. Next steps



Completed and upcoming steps

- ✓ Determine **conservation priorities** and **areas of interest**
- Establish the **overview of human activities** and assess their **impacts** on conservation priorities;
- Define **geographical boundaries**;
- Develop potential **conservation measures** and assess their **socio-economic impacts**;
- Meet with **Indigenous groups** and **relevant stakeholders** to discuss project boundaries and potential conservation measures;
- **Consult** Indigenous groups and stakeholders on the overall project (boundaries, conservation priorities and conservation measures).

Next steps

Indigenous groups and concerned stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide comments and make recommendations **throughout the process**.

- Presentation of **projects under study** and conservation priorities from June 2019.
- **Discussion** with Indigenous groups and relevant stakeholders on conservation measures.
- **Consultation** on the projects, including proposed conservation measures.

Next steps

- Conservation measures will be specific to the conservation priorities established for each project.
- **The socio-economic impacts of conservation measures will be assessed** and taken into account.
- If necessary, conservation tools other than MPAs could be considered.

Discussion period

Do you have questions or comments?

Thank you!

To submit comments or ask questions:

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