

**Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Summary**

March 28, 2019 – Ship Harbour, NS

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| **Participants** |
| *In Attendance* |
| **ORGANIZATION** |
| Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service |
| Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society |
| Eastern Shore Fishermen’s Protective Association (ESFPA) |
| Assoc. of Eastern Shore Communities-Protecting Environmental & Historical Access |
| Oceans North |
| NS Department of Intergovernmental Affairs |
| Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Partnership |
| Dalhousie University |
| Dalhousie University |
| Acadian Seaplants Ltd. |
| NS Seafood Alliance |
| Independent Buyer/Processor |
| Musquodoboit Harbour & Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Sheet Harbour & Area Chamber of Commerce |
| NS Salmon Association |
| Halifax Regional Municipality |
| Eastern Shore Forest Watch Association |
| Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore |
| Eastern Shore Wildlife Association |
| DFO - Oceans Management Program (OMP) |
| Transport Canada |
| NS Federation of Anglers and Hunters |
| DFO – C&P |
| DFO - Communications |
| DFO - Science |
| *Regrets* |
| **ORGANIZATION** |
| Mi’kmaw Conservation Group /Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) |
| Groundfish Enterprise Allocation Council |
| Aquaculture Association of NS |

*Note: Nineteen observers also attended the meeting.*

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| ***Meeting Objectives*** |
| 1. Review the geological resource assessment for the ESI AOI. 2. Share more information about *Oceans Act* MPA regulations and how MPAs are managed once designated. 3. Review initial contributions to the vision statement and updated goals for an ESI MPA. 4. Provide an update on the ecological risk assessment. 5. Provide an opportunity for Committee members to share knowledge, information or experience with topics related to the AOI |

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| ***Agenda Items and Corresponding Discussion Notes*** | | |
| 1. | **Opening Remarks and Introductions**   * **Review of Agenda and Meeting Objectives** * **Updates** | Wendy Williams  Tanya Koropatnick |
| **Highlights/Outcome**:  Wendy Williams (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. Introductions were conducted and Wendy went through a brief list of housekeeping items.  Tanya Koropatnick then provided an update on work that has been conducted since the last Advisory Committee meeting (see attached presentation). No questions or discussions followed the presentation. | |
| 2. | **Natural Resources Canada – Geological Resource Assessment** | Ned King  Jessica MacIntosh |
| **Highlights/Outcome**:  Ned King and Jessica MacIntosh provided a presentation on the results of the geological resource assessment conducted by Natural Resources Canada for the Eastern Shore Islands AOI (see attached presentation). The area was described as having a complex mosaic of substrate types. While the analysis showed the AOI has no hydrocarbons, there are some aggregate and some gold resources present. There are also no current plans for offshore renewable energy projects (e.g. wind farms).  **Discussion**:   * One representative asked that the link to the assessment be re-shared with the Advisory Committee. * One representative recommended that the geological resource assessment be shared with the consultant hired to conduct the independent socio-economic study. * One representative asked Ned what he thought was the potential for a company to consider offshore mining along the Eastern Shore. Ned explained that he is not a mining expert but given the current lack of regulatory framework for deep sea mining in Canada, the estimated amount of resources available compared to the amount accessible on land, and the environmental barriers/challenges with accessing the resource, it would be impractical, but not impossible, for a company to pursue access to the gold.   **For Action**:   * Re-share the link to the geological resource assessment with the Advisory Committee. * Share the geological resource assessment with the consultant for the independent socio-economic study. | |
| 3. | **MPA 101** | Derek Fenton |
| **Highlights/Outcome**:  Derek Fenton presented on the common elements of *Oceans Act* MPAs in Canada, how *Oceans Act* regulations are generally organized, and the differences between Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs) and *Oceans Act* MPAs (see attached presentation).  **Discussion**:   * Concerns were raised regarding how an MPA would protect from the increasing number of people visiting the area and the islands; as an *Oceans Act* MPA does not control activities on the islands so fishermen and locals have to clean up after tourists. DFO explained that the number of visitors are likely to increase with or without an MPA designation but an *Oceans Act* MPA does bring management attention to concerns such as these. For example, activity approvals can ensure that tourism operators have waste management plans and there would be an opportunity to provide educational resources to deter littering and encourage environmental stewardship. There could be funding for marine debris management planning and activities such as beach cleanups to engage the community as is done in the Musquash MPA. * One representative said that the Eastern Shore is already well protected by the existing legislation and an MPA is not needed. They also expressed concern about buffer zones being a component of the site design and that the area name include surrounding lands (hence the name Eastern Shore Islands AOI). This concern about buffer zones was raised several times throughout the day. DFO responded with the following information:   + An *Oceans Act* MPA stops at the low water mark and by law cannot extend onto the land. As with any coastal area, there are concerns about the impact of land activities on the marine environment, however the MPA Regulations do not directly apply.   + The name “Eastern Shore Islands” came from the coastal ecologically and biologically significant area (EBSA) of the same name; this EBSA encompasses the islands and surrounding waters of the archipelago from Clam Bay to Liscomb Point. The identification of the Eastern Shore Islands EBSA was the starting point for the federal government’s interest in this area as a potential focus for conservation. As a study area for *Oceans Act* MPA designation, the conservation focus is on the waters surrounding the islands. If the site goes forward as an MPA, the name can be changed.   + Buffers are often considered in the MPA planning process as part of site design. For example, textbook MPA design guidelines recommend a high protection zone surrounded by a zone where some activities are permitted to occur (e.g. the buffer zone). Note that both of these zones would occur within the boundaries of the site. At the last Advisory Committee meeting, we discussed that the Eastern Shore Islands would not have a high protection zone therefore this standard design strategy would not be used here.   + Another example of how buffers are considered in MPA design was given: consider an area containing a highly sensitive cold-water coral concentration. When designing a tool to protect these corals, you wouldn’t draw the boundaries immediately around the corals, you would include some extra space (“the buffer”) inside the boundaries of the site to ensure that the corals are adequately protected by activities that occur adjacent to the boundary (e.g., give some extra space to ensure fishing gear towed by a vessel outside the boundaries will not drag across the coral within the closure). This type of design would not be needed in an Eastern Shore Islands MPA. * One representative asked why Parks Canada was on the Advisory Committee. DFO explained that Parks Canada has never been at the Eastern Shore Islands Advisory Committee table; it was clarified that Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), which is a member of the Committee, is an environmental not-for-profit organization, not a federal agency. * One representative said that this all came down to distrust of government, and mentioned hearing about negative experiences from some people regarding the MPA establishment process for the St. Anns Bank MPA. People are scared of DFO controlling their activities within the MPA and making unilateral decisions about the management of the area.   + In response to the comments about St. Anns Bank, DFO explained that throughout the St. Anns Bank site establishment process, the Department worked closely with the fishing industry to ensure that traditional fixed gear fisheries could continue in the most important fishing areas and to write the regulations in such a way as to allow for the introduction of new sustainable fisheries. The feedback from stakeholders was extremely influential in shaping the final MPA boundary, which differs significantly from the shape of the original AOI. | |
| 4. | **Vision statement and goals** | Leah McConney  Marty King |
| **Highlights/Outcome**: Leah McConney shared a brief description of the March 14th meeting to develop a draft vision statement that was held with interested and available members of the Advisory Committee as well as the next steps for further development of a vision for a potential future MPA (e.g. community input at spring open house). Marty King presented the latest version of draft goals, which incorporate feedback received from the Advisory Committee to date. The KMKNO-Oceans Working Group is currently reviewing the goals. Once they provide input, it will be shared with the Committee.  **Discussion**:   * A discussion occurred regarding whether an MPA is required to conduct science within an area. DFO agreed that while an MPA is not needed for science to occur, experience has shown that MPAs do attract the attention of the research community as areas for focused studies. MPAs also offer opportunities for collaboration and coordination on projects of interest to the community and industries in the area. Additionally, MPAs do come with some funding, which can be used to leverage additional resources from other funding sources for larger studies. * One representative said that they do not like the term MPA as it asserts that the rest of the ocean isn’t protected and discounts the conservation efforts made to date. Another representative responded that an MPA ultimately does offer a higher level of protection than the surrounding area and ensures that future activities do not threaten what people value about the area. * One representative pointed out that one strength of the current approach is that the Advisory Committee represents interests beyond that of the fishing industry, therefore there are opportunities for projects of interest to other components of the community to occur . * The WITAP representative clarified that he contacted 3 members of the Advisory Committee to talk about developing a vision statement for the Eastern Shore, not the AOI. While the discussions did not result in a mutual recommendation, the WITAP representative drafted a vision statement based on these discussions to bring to the preliminary AOI vision meeting As food for thought to start the brainstorming for the AOI. The vision statement is: “All the communities along our coast are ecologically sustainable, economically thriving, and culturally resilient.” The WITAP representative recommended that the AOI/MPA have a mission statement which is nested within the vision statement for the Eastern Shore which provides a linkage to the AOI/MPA goals. The WITAP representative proposed the following mission statement: “The Eastern Shore Islands MPA will be collaboratively established and managed to ensure the sustainability of the marine ecology and to enhance the economy of the coastal communities.”   + DFO explained that they do not know of any *Oceans Act* MPAs with mission statements but it is something that we would be open to discussing further. * One representative expressed concerns about how the area would actually be managed; while the vision and goals were objectives they could support, they were concerned about how the area would be governed after designation and how the composition of the Advisory Committee overtime would greatly influence decisions for the management of the area.   + DFO explained that the current Advisory Committee would continue after an *Oceans Act* MPA designation so there would be continuity in the composition. Additionally, once the goals and the vision are decided upon, they would be used to guide the decisions regarding the management of the area (e.g. If there is a goal regarding sustainable use, then any decisions regarding new activities would have to be consistent with that goal).   + Another representative expressed concerns that over time people will stop being involved and at a certain point, it will become just a few interested representatives making decisions. DFO offered to talk more about how the Advisory Committee of *Oceans Act* MPAs function post-designation, how they can be broad-based, sustained for the long-term and designed to meet the unique needs of each area.   **For Action**:   * At the next Advisory Committee meeting, DFO to provide a presentation on how the MPA would be managed and what that would look like from the perspective of the Advisory Committee and the community. * DFO will share latest version of the draft goals with the Advisory Committee electronically. Advisory Committee to provide additional comments on the draft goals and vision/mission for the MPA. * DFO to share KMKNO’s input into the draft goals at the next Advisory Committee meeting. | |
| 5. | **Risk assessment** | Leah McConney |
| **Highlights/Outcome**: Leah provided an update on the status of the report, the current plan for the peer-review of each chapter, and the anticipated timelines for completion of the various chapters of the ecological risk assessment.  **Discussion**:   * One representative pointed out that the national DFO risk assessment framework for aquaculture is currently being worked on and questioned how our risk assessment fit within that. DFO explained that we are aligning with the broader framework but some differences, primarily tolerance for risk, will be factored in because we are working within the context of an MPA. * It was suggested that the aquaculture chapter incorporate the previously completed environmental assessments for finfish aquaculture within the AOI and the responses written by community groups, as well as the Report of the Independent Expert Panel on Aquaculture Science. * One representative recommended scoping the DFO Fisheries Protection Program into the review of additional chapters of the risk assessment, not just Marine Transportation. Additionally, they raised concerns about the lack of an “ecosystem approach” to the risk assessment, especially for Atlantic Salmon where we should be looking at habitat, food supply, and water quality needs of the species in the marine environment. DFO explained that the risk assessment was scoped to focus on the conservation priorities, which includes Atlantic Salmon, to make it a manageable project that could be completed in a timely fashion. All members are welcome to provide additional resources/information to be incorporated into the risk assessment before it is shared with the Advisory Committee for their review. DFO will also state who has contributed to the drafting of the risk assessment, however the slides shown today focused on groups identified for reviewing the document, not those who have contributed in the development of the document, which has included input and advice from the Fisheries Protection Program. * One representative asked about the conflicting position of DFO promoting/supporting aquaculture while also regulating it. The Chair clarified that as a regulator DFO plays multiple roles but is not pro- or anti-aquaculture. * One representative asked if seals were scoped into the risk assessment. DFO indicated that they were not. * One representative expressed their disappointment that the aquaculture risk assessment was not completed for this meeting and may not be completed until the fall. They stressed the importance of completing this assessment as soon as possible as this was a priority issue for many people.   **For Action**:   * DFO to ensure identified resources are considered as part of the aquaculture risk assessment. * DFO to explore options to shorten the timeline for the aquaculture chapter of the risk assessment. * DFO to follow-up with Advisory Committee representatives regarding specific feedback on the ecological risk assessment. | |
| 6. | **Membership Presentations** | Oceans North  WITAP  Researcher from Dalhousie University  Nova Scotia Salmon Association  ESFPA |
| **Highlights/Outcome**: Representatives from Oceans North, Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Partnership, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, ESFPA, and a researcher from Dalhousie University provided presentations to the Advisory Committee. Presentations are attached if the presenter provided permission to share.  **Discussion**:  Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Partnership:   * One representative asked about the role that the potential for an MPA played into the organization’s funding applications and plans for the future. It was explained that the proposed MPA has not and does not play a role; the organization will continue its plans with or without an MPA.   Researcher from Dalhousie University:   * One representative asked about the role that sea urchins play in the presence and health of kelp beds. The presenter explained that sea urchins are a natural disturbance to kelp forests, but kelp can return from urchin barrens. A discussion ensued about how an MPA could protect kelp beds and DFO explained that the sea urchin/kelp cycle is a natural phenomenon – urchin barrens will eventually be repopulated by kelp as part of the natural cycle, and an MPA can help to protect those areas where kelp forests grow so that the kelp can recover and thrive. MPAs can help manage environmental pressure from human activities, which can in turn support ecosystem resilience against broader pressures such as climate change. * It was observed that local users, such as fishermen, know the area well and can be resources for informing studies such as this one.   Eastern Shore Fishermen’s Protective Association:   * A discussion ensued regarding the relationship between the fishing association and DFO in general. It was explained that all the science conducted by the ESFPA has been done voluntarily by the fishermen and in some cases, their scientific contributions are not recognized by DFO, e.g. in fishery stock assessments. Concern was raised about the distrust of DFO exhibited by the fishing association; their active participation in the process (e.g., contributing knowledge and data for the risk assessment) is important for achieving the best possible is design. The fishing association explained that DFO has access to much of their scientific data but they have had negative experiences with sharing detailed information with DFO in the past, as it was felt that industry-information has been used to the detriment of the fishermen. | |
| 7. | **Membership perspectives roundtable to help inform next steps** | Wendy Williams |
| **Highlights/Outcome**: Time did not permit for membership perspectives nor was there time for observers to ask questions or provide comments on the day’s proceedings.  Due to the time limitations, Wendy quickly ran through the list of action items (as identified in relevant sections above) prior to dismissing the meeting.  **For Action**:   * DFO will circulate the draft summary report from the meeting, as well as priority next steps shortly. | |