

An Update on the Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest



We want to provide you with some updates on the Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest (AOI) process for a potential Marine Protected Area (MPA) designation.

Over the last few months, our team has been very busy working on the ecological risk assessment and holding several important engagement events. On October 23rd, we held our third Fisheries Working Group meeting with the Eastern Shore Fishermen's Protective Association (ESFPA). Shortly afterwards, we hosted community open houses in Tangier and Moser River.

The open houses aimed to share information, answer questions, and hear from the local community. Most attendees showed up with plenty of questions, with some interested in the potential opportunities offered by the AOI and others expressing concerns. Members of our staff were there to describe the steps in the MPA establishment process and answer questions about MPAs. We were pleased with the turnout and we would like to provide you with a brief summary of the feedback we received.



Nick Hawkins

What we heard

What we heard: The fishery is the backbone of the Eastern Shore.

Our response: We agree. Based on our socio-economic profile of the AOI, there are approximately 145 harvesters who all rely heavily on this area. The landed value of fisheries within the AOI is on average \$12 million a year, approximately 95 percent of which comes from lobster. The Department is committed to working with fishermen and the local communities to design an MPA that protects the fishery and the ecosystem that supports it.

What we heard: The area is beautiful and special, and it should be kept that way.

Our response: Yes, we agree. The area is unique and highly natural. It supports a diversity of marine life as well as the economy, traditions and culture of the local community. An MPA would help protect this special marine environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

What we heard: It is essential that the Department involves the users of the area in MPA design.

Our response: Yes. The Fisheries Working Group and the Advisory Committee were created to ensure resource users and the community have a strong voice in the process. Open houses and other public events will continue to be held to engage the broader community. We are still early in the process and no decisions have been made regarding the boundaries, prohibited activities or other aspects of a potential MPA for the area.

What we heard: People are worried MPA restrictions will impact how they use and enjoy the area.

Our response: *Oceans Act* MPAs only extend to the low tide line. Therefore, activities on land, such as hunting and camping, and activities in the intertidal zone (between low tide and high tide lines), such as clamming and rockweed harvesting would not be affected by an MPA. Likewise, an MPA would not impact property ownership, or maintenance activities, such as private wharf repairs. Recreational activities, such as swimming, kayaking, recreational fishing and boating, can also still be enjoyed within an MPA. Other activities, such as commercial fisheries are being analyzed through an ecological risk assessment. We anticipate that the risk assessment will confirm that traditional, fixed gear fisheries will be compatible with a future Eastern Shore Islands MPA. So far, and in direct response to recommendations by the Advisory Committee, we have completed the assessment of the lobster fishery. Based on the results, the Department does not propose additional restrictions for this fishery within a future MPA. The remaining sections of the risk assessment will also be shared in the near future.

What we heard: The AOI process is creating uncertainty for local industry. Some residents are concerned that there may be an impact on future development / current investment.

Our response: Based on suggestions from the community, we are hiring an independent consultant to develop a social and economic profile of the communities adjacent to the AOI. This study will include a review of potential opportunities and disadvantages of an MPA for the Eastern Shore. The work description for this study was drafted with input from the Advisory Committee. Once complete, the results will be posted on our website.

What we heard: Lack of concrete answers is creating additional uncertainty. The risk assessment needs to be completed as soon as possible to clarify which activities may be incompatible with a potential Eastern Shore Islands MPA.

Our response: The draft risk assessment for the lobster fishery is now complete. Based on the results, the Department does not propose additional restrictions for this fishery within a future MPA. The full risk assessment, including assessments of other commercial fisheries, aquaculture, and marine transportation-related activities, will be ready for review (in draft form) in early 2019.

What we heard: There is distrust of government in the community as a result of past experience with municipal, provincial and federal government actions.

Our response: We understand we have work to do to build trust in the community. The Department is committed to an open and transparent MPA process that includes consultation at each step. Over time, we hope our actions will demonstrate our integrity and commitment to this work. We are always interested and open to advice from the community on how we can continue to improve the engagement process.

What we heard: Activities in the area are already regulated – what can an MPA offer that would add value?

Our response: An MPA on the Eastern Shore would not create further complexity for activities that are already well-regulated. For example, fisheries would still be managed using license conditions under the *Fisheries Act*. MPAs are proactive management tools that help to protect and conserve ecosystem health while ensuring local communities can continue to sustainably use and enjoy the area. An Eastern Shore Islands MPA could help prevent future incompatible (e.g., industrial) marine-based activities, protect current low-impact fisheries (such as the lobster fishery), and encourage new opportunities, such as responsible nature-based tourism. It could provide a focus for scientific research, education and outreach, and present opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with First Nations, fishing industry, academia, and the local community.

What we heard: There were mixed feelings about the potential of an MPA to bring more visitors to the area. While some were excited about potential economic benefits, others were concerned about impacts related to increased tourism.

Our response: Musquash Estuary in Southwest New Brunswick (<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/mpa-zpm/musquash/index-eng.html>) is an example of a coastal MPA where recreational activities and occasional commercial tourism occur. For Musquash, commercial tourism activities are regulated through the activity application process, which includes input from the MPA Advisory Committee. Recreational activities are not restricted through the regulations, but we do provide information to visitors about public access points and hazards through signage, an awareness brochure, and information on the website. Additionally, for the Eastern Shore Islands AOI, the social and economic profile will contain a review of potential opportunities and disadvantages of an MPA for the Eastern Shore, including tourism. Once complete, this information will be posted on DFO's website.



Protecting quality of the marine environment for current and future generations

At the event, attendees were asked to answer, “**What is important to you in the Eastern Shore Islands AOI?**” The top five responses were:

- Protecting the quality of the marine environment for current and future generations
- Traditional inshore fisheries need to continue
- Maintaining recreation opportunities (hunting, boating, fishing)
- Conserving the culture of the Eastern Shore
- Economic development

As you can see below, the **draft goals for the proposed Eastern Shore Islands MPA** are aligned with the top five responses:

- Conserve and protect the ecological integrity of the area, including its naturalness, biodiversity, productivity, and special natural features (e.g., sea grass, kelp beds, spawning areas).
- Support the ecologically sustainable use of living marine resources in the area.
- Protect and support traditional fixed-gear fisheries in the area, including lobster, herring, groundfish and others.
- Help preserve the cultural values of the area and maintain the close connection between the local communities and the sea.
- Foster collaboration between science, industry and local communities to better understand and manage living marine resources and the broader ecosystem.

We also received a number of science questions that attendees would like to have answered and a list of activities that take place in and adjacent to the AOI. We will be considering these in our research and analysis moving forward.

A full summary of what we heard at the open houses will be posted on our website next month. We have already posted summary documents from the Advisory Committee meeting and we will continue to update the Frequently Asked Questions section as we move through this process.



For more information

If you have any questions, or are wondering how an MPA in the Eastern Shore Islands area might affect you, please contact us at: MaritimesMPAs@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or 902-426-9919.

Also, please visit our website regularly for updates or follow us on social media: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/aoi-si/easternshore-ilescoteest-eng.html>

