



June 29, 2022

Mr. Steve Devitt
Director of Sustainability
Atlantic Ground Council

By email.

Dear Mr. Devitt,

Re: Feedback on planned update of Unit 1 and 2 Redfish harvest strategy, HCR and management measures

Thank you for the inquiry regarding the forthcoming Unit 1 redfish fishery management measures in preparation for a commercial fishery. The Department acknowledges Atlantic Groundfish Council's fishery improvement project (FIP) for the Unit 1 and 2 stock and the importance of the FIP for market development purposes. As you are aware, the Department has been monitoring the stock recovery of both redfish species since the successful recruitment episodes of 2011- 2013 were initially detected. The most recently published [Science Advisory Report for Redfish in Units 1 and 2 in 2019](#) noted that the deepwater redfish (*S. mentella*) stock was considered to be in the Healthy Zone, while the Acadian redfish (*S. fasciatus*) stock was still in the Cautious Zone but expected to continue growing.

There remain a number of important resource management processes to complete prior to a commercial opening of the Unit 1 fishery. The Department is expecting to finalize quota allocation decisions in the fall of 2022. Once that process is complete, a consultation process will be conducted over the fall/winter of 2022/23 to develop a harvest strategy, harvest decision rules and management measures in anticipation of potential re-opening of the commercial Unit 1 fishery. Once finalized, management measures will be published through the Department's [Fisheries Management Decisions](#) webpage.

It is worthwhile describing some of the preparation work that has been undertaken by the Department, in collaboration with industry, to prepare for re-opening of this fishery. The following projects have been conducted with a view of improving data collection from the fishery and reducing possible interactions with other ecosystem components.

- Since 2017, the Department has permitted an Experimental Fishery which has focused project proponents on improving redfish fishing gear, in particular, developing mid-water trawl gear which can retain necessary commercial catch rates while reducing habitat interactions.
- Starting in 2018, at-sea observers (ASOs) were trained to collect anal fin ray data from the Unit 1 experimental and index fisheries as a means to provide species composition of the two co-occurring redfish species. An update of this data collection is expected to be published in the next stock status update.

- ASOs have been collecting bycatch data in the directed Unit 1 redfish index fishery since 2000. This data provides important understanding on the interactions between the directed redfish fishery and other species. Most recently, data was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the fishery on white hake (*Urophycis tenuis*), a species that has been designated as Endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). That analysis can be seen [here](#), and will help to shape forthcoming management measures in the fishery.

I hope this information responds to your query. As I'm sure you understand, the Department remains open to further discussions on client-led initiatives such as the Unit 1 and 2 redfish FIP, pursuant to achieving mutually supportive workplans, priorities, and activities.

Sincerely,

Adam Burns