

# Northern Cod Acoustic Tracking Project

an exciting milestone of the ASP-AGC Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP)

## **\$8.5M Northern Cod Acoustic Tracking Project will identify and address gaps in understanding of Northern Cod stock**

*Financial support from industry, academia, government and international customers demonstrate the importance of the project and valuable results it will generate.*

**(September 10, 2019 - St. John's, NL)** – Today, the Association of Seafood Producers and Atlantic Groundfish Council announced an \$8.5 Million Northern Cod Acoustic Tracking (NCAT) Project. The NCAT project, is part of the ASP-AGC Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP), launched in 2015 for Northern Cod in NAFO divisions 2J,3K and 3L.

“The NCAT Project is an exciting, world class acoustic tracking project that will contribute to our understanding of the Northern Cod stock components and their movement along the slope of the continental shelf, as well as their inshore/offshore migration patterns,” explained Dr. Fred Whoriskey, Executive Director of the Ocean Tracking Network. “This in turn will enable more effective stock assessment modeling and management measures to control fishing mortality.”

The project aims to answer critical questions around migration patterns, migration timing, location of spawning aggregations, stock productivity and managing exploitation rates.

The project will begin with acoustic and conventional tagging and genetic sampling of 1,260 cod. An acoustic array with 75 receiver moorings will be deployed in 16 “gates” of receiver lines spaced approximately 5km apart in key habitat depths of 250-500m. The gates will cover hundreds of kilometres from the northern part of area 2J, south through 3K and 3L. Acoustically tagged cod migrating through or milling around the receivers will be recorded.

Data from the acoustic array will be collected by a solar powered wave glider, controlled out of Halifax by experts at the Ocean Tracking Network. The wave glider will travel between the 75 receiver stations, connecting remotely to each receiver via a radio frequency modem in the receiver and will upload data into its memory. Once connected, it is uploaded to the Ocean Tracking Network. Data upload will occur at least once a year. Being able to collect data remotely is significantly more cost effective with a much lower carbon footprint compared to uploading data individually using a vessel platform.

“This project demonstrates the tangible impact of academia, industry and government working together to improve science, and in turn, management of marine resources,” stated Bruce Chapman, President of the Atlantic Groundfish Council and co-chair of ASP-AGC Fisheries Improvement Project.

With key funding provided through the Development of Autonomous Marine Observation Systems (DAMOS) project by the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, the NCAT project represents world class innovation through collaboration of academic, government and industry organization. This includes Dalhousie University, Memorial University, Ocean Frontier Institute (OFI), Ocean Tracking Network (OTN), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the ASP-AGC FIP.

*In conjunction with ASP-AGC FIP Partners:*

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Customers from the UK, France and US, who believe in the potential of Northern Cod are also financially supporting the Fisheries Improvement Project. This includes Youngs Seafood, Marks & Spencer, Sysco France and High Liner Foods.

“When experts from scientists and researchers to industry participants, customers and governments all agree to support a project of this scope and magnitude, that speaks to the importance of the project and the valuable results it will generate for the future of the cod fishery,” added Whoriskey.

“The Northern Cod Acoustic Tracking Project announced today will provide a much greater understanding of Northern Cod stock behavior off our shores. The data collected will help develop more effective stock assessment modeling and management measures to ensure a sustainable Northern cod fishery into the future. I applaud the Association of Seafood Producers and the Atlantic Groundfish Council for their continued investments in fisheries improvement projects that support the growth of the industry in this province,” says the Honourable Gerry Byrne, Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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### **About the Atlantic Groundfish Council**

The Atlantic Groundfish Council (formerly GEAC) is a non-profit industry association representing year-round groundfish harvesters in Atlantic Canada. Its members employ thousands of people, in mostly year-round jobs, in rural communities throughout Atlantic Canada. The Council contributes to research that will improve the sustainability and management of groundfish fisheries by actively supporting science, sustainability certifications and responsible management.

### **About Association of Seafood Producers**

The Association of Seafood Producers is a not for profit industry trade association representing seafood processors in Newfoundland and Labrador. ASP works for the betterment of the industry in the areas of public policy, sustainability and fisheries management.

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