



Southwest Nova Scotia / Bay of Fundy Herring

Rebuilding Plan Working Group / Management Working
Group

March 12, 2026



Resource Management
Maritimes Region



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Welcome and Introductions



Agenda

1.	Welcome and introductions / Code of Conduct
2.	Overview of Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion of purpose, scope, and membership/participation• Working group objectives and draft terms of reference• Overview of anticipated meeting schedule
3.	SWNS/BoF Rebuilding Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of current situation and expectations• Overview of tentative workplan for rebuilding plan
4.	SWNS/BoF Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direction if no rebuilding plan required• Incorporation with IFMP updates
5.	Management Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of existing management framework and potential areas of focus• Roundtable on management approaches
6.	Next steps/meetings



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2. Overview of Working Group



Overview of Working Group

- Purpose/Scope:
 - Forum for focused discussions on the management plan for the Southwest Nova Scotia / Bay of Fundy herring stock
 - In some ways, an evolution of the SWNS/BoF Subcommittee that we previously set up
 - Focus will be on developing the rebuilding plan, and if no rebuilding plan is required, the working group will shift focus to the management plan and updates to the IFMP
- Membership:
 - Terms of reference and proposed membership
 - Working Group will report back to full SFHAC



Purpose of group

- Why are we setting up this group now?
 - SWNS/BoF herring is still on the next batch of stocks to be prescribed to the *Fish Stocks Provisions*. Previous assessments have shown the stock in the critical zone
 - If a rebuilding plan is required, we will have 2-year timeline to complete
 - Certain components of rebuilding plan need to be addressed through Science processes – this is the ideal time to scope those out and identify before the modelling/assessment takes place
- What if we don't end up needing a rebuilding plan?
 - Work from this group will instead contribute to updates to the IFMP and management plan for the stock
 - Focus on items that will be useful for management in either scenario



Goals of today's meeting

- Goals of today's meeting:
 - Review terms of reference and membership for this group
 - Discuss anticipated timelines and next steps for either rebuilding plan or management plan
 - Roundtable discussion, and opportunity to identify focus areas for management measures to incorporate into science process
 - Set timeline for next meeting



Terms of Reference Review



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3. SWNS/BoF Rebuilding Plan



Rebuilding Plan

- [Previous rebuilding plan](#) was published in 2013
 - Out of date and not consistent with current rebuilding guidance, however, some elements of plan (e.g. objectives, strategies and tactics) could be used to inform new plan
- New rebuilding plan guidance can be found here:
<https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/reports-rapports/regs/sff-cpd/precautionary-precaution-eng.htm>
- Work to date:
 - Resource Management has met with other DFO sectors to review and map out the requirements and identify items that will need to be developed. Additional workplanning has taken place through 2024-25.
 - Discussions with DFO Science to tie in framework to rebuilding plan timelines



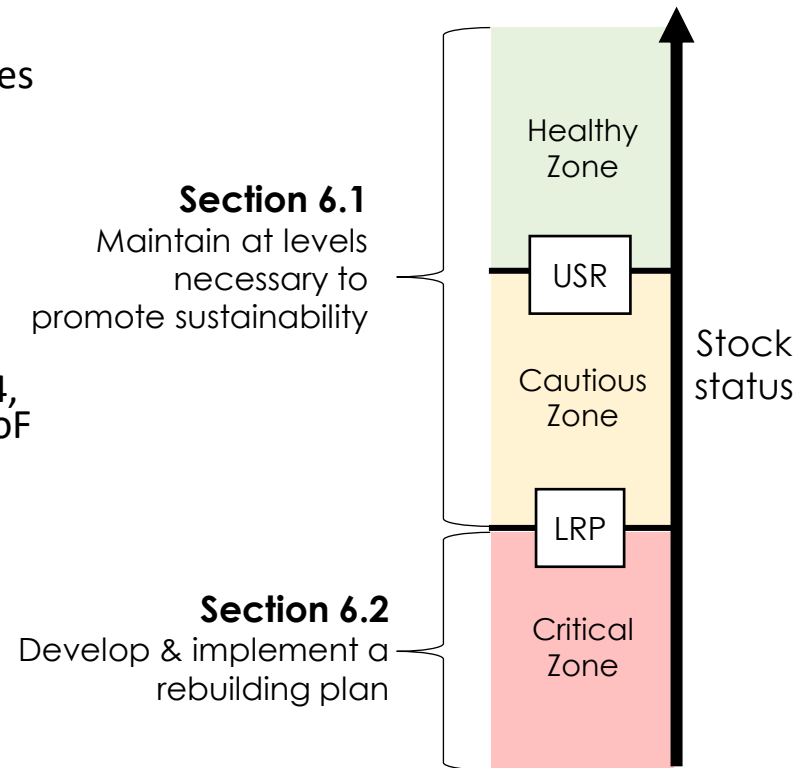
How we got here

- **2018:** SWNS/BoF herring re-enters the critical zone
- **2019:** New stock assessment framework incorporating an MSE initiated. Intended to be the essence of a new rebuilding plan. Minimum conservation objective set based on existing DFO guidelines for rebuilding plans (high probability (>75%) of rebuilding out of the critical zone within 2 herring generations (10 years))
- **2022 (Feb):** Science elements of MSE completed and peer reviewed
- **2022 (June):** New rebuilding plan guidelines released
- **2022 (June):** TAC reduced, but implementation of MSE/rebuilding plan deferred
- **2023:** TAC reduced, but implementation of MSE/rebuilding plan deferred again
- **2024:** TAC reduced, MSE no longer being pursued. Plans for new Science framework
- **2025:** Initially proceeded with TAC from 2024, then increased by Minister in-season
- **2026:** TAC decision in place. Science framework processes underway.



Evolving Legal Framework: Fish Stock Provisions

- Fish stock provisions (FSP) introduced in 2019 amendments to the *Fisheries Act* (s. 6.1-6.3).
- The FSP contain two tiers of management objectives focused on conservation:
 - Maintain stocks at levels necessary to promote sustainability; and
 - Develop and implement a rebuilding plan to rebuild the stock above its LRP.
- The FSP only apply to major stocks prescribed in regulation, and thus apply to 30 stocks as of April 4, 2022. A second batch of stocks, including SWNS/BoF herring, has been proposed for prescribing in regulations.
- These objectives are based on DFO's 2009 Precautionary Approach Policy, and the policy will still apply to these stocks.
- Within the constraints of the FSP, the Minister maintains discretion to consider conservation, cultural and socio-economic factors in decisions.



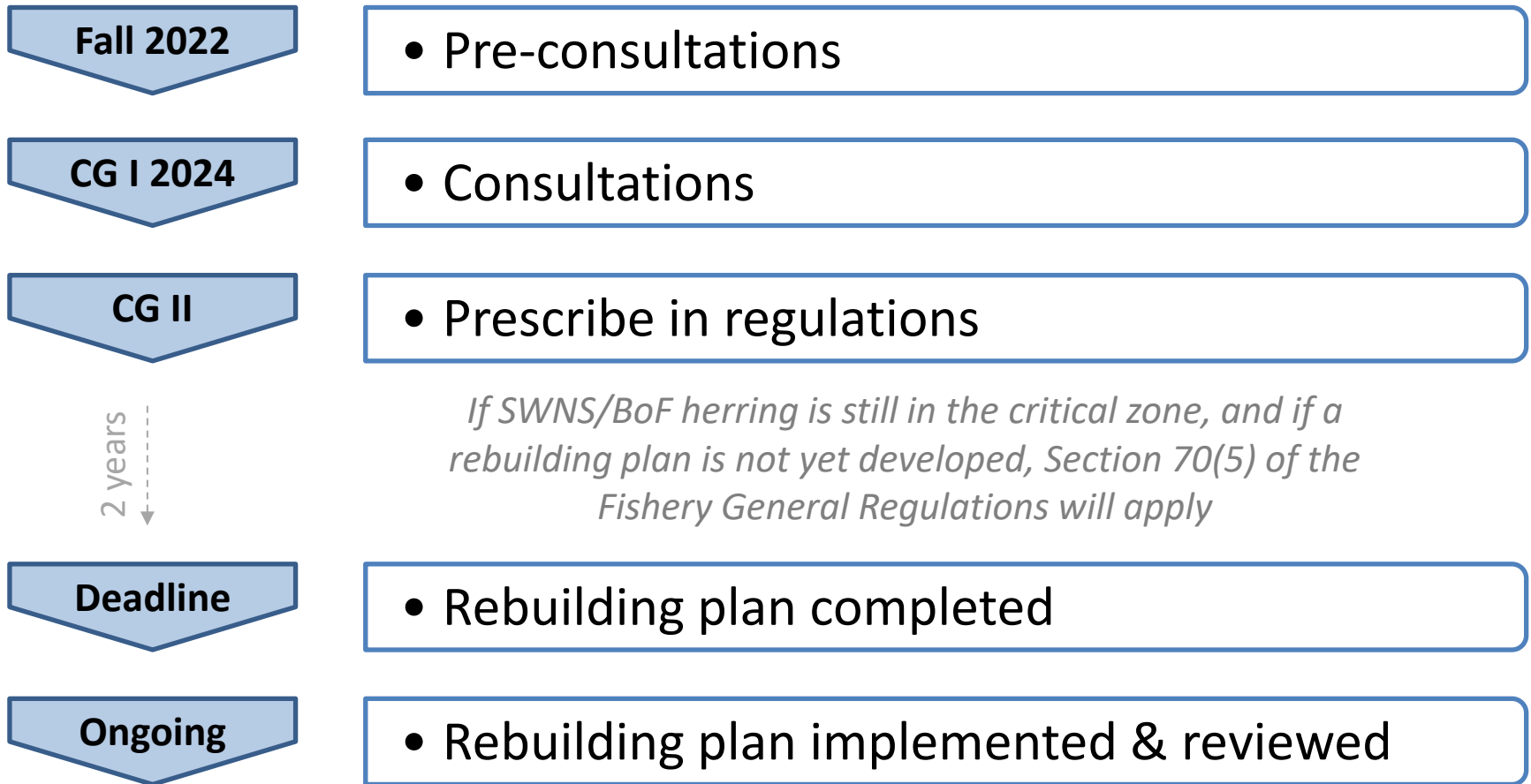


Fish Stocks Provisions Update

- “Batch 2” of Major Stocks was posted to Canada Gazette 1 on October 12, 2024
 - Proposes to amend the Fishery (General) Regulations to include “Atlantic herring, NAFO 4X5Y (Southwest Nova Scotia / Bay of Fundy Spawning Component)” as a major stock
 - <https://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2024/2024-10-12/html/reg1-eng.html>
- Consultations closed November 11
- Potential posting to Canada Gazette 2 (final regulation) was anticipated by spring 2025, but timeline has been delayed
 - Mandatory timelines for rebuilding would be effective on the date regulation goes into force



Steps to Prescribing in Regulations





Working Assumptions

- While there are no dates set or decisions made, SWNS/BoF herring could be prescribed in regulations as a major stock at any time
- If prescribed and below the LRP, s. 6.2 of the *Fisheries Act* will apply

Fisheries Act, s. 6.2

If a major fish stock has declined to or below its limit reference point, the Minister shall develop a plan to rebuild the stock above that point in the affected area, taking into account the biology of the fish and the environmental conditions affecting the stock, and implement it within the period provided for in the plan.



Important Considerations

- DFO would have two years* from the date of prescribing SWNS/BoF herring to develop a rebuilding plan
- Fishery would be constrained by s. 70(5) of the *Fishery General Regulations*

Fishery General Regulations s. 70(5)

If fishing of the major fish stock while the plan is being developed is permitted by the Minister, the Minister shall ensure that the level of fishing of the stock during that time is consistent with the rebuilding of the stock above the limit reference point.

*Minister has the option to extend by 12 months “to collect and/or provide scientific information critical to developing the rebuilding plan”



Rebuilding Plan Components

- After FSP listing and while plan is under development:
 - Probability of preventable decline
 - Projections for stock under various scenarios (to allow determination of whether management measures will promote stock growth)



Rebuilding Plan Components

- Overview of the stock (relevant biology, description of fisheries, etc.)
- Overview of the probable factors that led to the decline of the species as well as those that may limit rebuilding
- Measurable objectives aimed at rebuilding the stock
 - Rebuilding target and timeline
 - Additional measurable objectives and timelines
- Management measures aimed at achieving the objectives
- Socio-Economic Analysis
- Method to track progress toward achieving objectives
- Periodic review of the rebuilding plan



Tentative workplan*

Policy and Economics			Socio-Economic Profile		Comprehensive SEA					
Science Framework workplan	Review Data inputs / Tech feedback meeting/ Begin Modeling framework	CSAS 1 Data Inputs	Modeling Framework / Tech Feedback meetings on Modeling	Modeling Framework / Tech Feedback meetings on Modeling	CSAS 2 – Modeling Ref Pts	CSAS 3 – Stock Status and Harvest Levels				
Resource Management	Batch 2 Listing Finalized [Delayed] Internal and External Rebuilding Plan Working Groups (RPWG)	Meetings with RPWGs	Identify rebuilding target Identify candidate measurable objectives to rebuild stock	Include requests in TORs for CSAS 2/3		Full draft ready for consultation and review*	Final review of plan by RPWG *	Submission of Rebuilding Plan for Approval*	Approval of Rebuilding Plan by Minister* Notice of approval	Preparation for web posting Online publication – within 120 days of plans approval *
	Oct-Dec 2025	Jan-Mar 2026	Apr-June 2026	Jul-Sep 2026	Oct-Dec 2026	Jan-Mar 2027	Apr-Jun 2027	Jul-Sep 2027	Oct-Dec 2027	Jan-Mar 2028

*Workplan developed based on anticipated fall 2025 Batch 2 listing; timelines may shift with delayed listing



But...do we need a rebuilding plan?

- Stock status
 - Stock has been assessed below LRP. It is not yet clear how the new framework and assessment will change our assessment of the stock.
- LRP
 - Reference points will be reviewed as part of upcoming CSAS processes
 - Status relative to LRP could be uncertain
- If FSP listing happens and we have uncertainty about the LRP, how do we proceed?
 - Further follow up on this question will be required



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4. SWNS/BoF Management Plan



What if we don't need a rebuilding plan?

- What if the stock is not prescribed?
 - If the stock is not prescribed as a Major Stock, legal requirement/timelines are not there; however, under DFO's Precautionary Approach framework, rebuilding plan should still be developed for stocks below LRP
- Stock Status
 - If the stock is not below the LRP, a rebuilding plan may not be required; though it may be advisable if the stock is near the critical zone.
- Alternatively, focus can shift to management under IFMP
 - Development of a USR may aid in development of harvest control rules



Incorporation into IFMP updates

- IFMP was last formally updated in 2020
 - Evergreen document, but many sections are out of date
 - Components being developed for purposes of rebuilding plan can be refocused to contribute to updates in IFMP



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5. Management Objectives



Overview of current management

- Existing management plan:
 - Overall TAC
 - Season and some spatial/temporal closures
 - Quota split between gear types (mobile vs. fixed)
 - Gear restrictions
 - Voluntary purse seine management measures
 - Fish size and juvenile count limits
 - 100% DMC monitoring of landings



Roundtable

- What do we see as areas of focus for management approaches moving forward?
 - Separate area management?
 - Sub-area quotas?
 - Closures?
 - Temporal or spatial
 - Small fish protocols?
 - Other ideas?
- Among these areas, what would need to be assessed as part of the upcoming science processes?
- Development of additional reference points (e.g. USR) could aid in developing harvest control rules



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6. Next Steps/Meetings



Next steps/meetings

- SFHAC scheduled for April 14
 - Report on this working group will be provided to full committee
- Working Group
 - Next meeting
 - Summer, ahead of modelling CSAS?



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Closing Remarks / Adjournment