



NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR
GROUNDFISH INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

**2017 NORTHERN COD STEWARDSHIP FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSAL**

SUBMITTED TO

FISHERIES & OCEANS CANADA

April - 2017

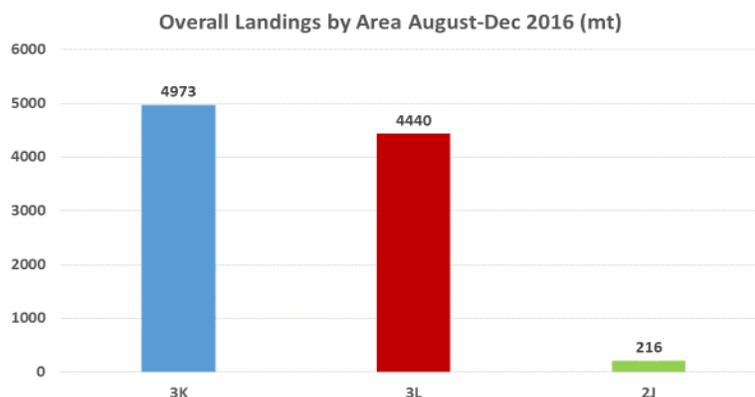
BACKGROUND

The Newfoundland and Labrador Groundfish Industry Development Council was formed in April 2016 and is comprised of the FFAW and 10 NL Processing companies. The objective of the NL-GIDC is to produce a “Plate to Ocean”, market-driven strategic plan to revitalize the province’s groundfish industry. The plan will focus on maximizing the value of NL groundfish products in order to improve the economic viability and the long-term sustainability of owner-operator enterprises, onshore processing plants and coastal communities while respecting the conservation requirements of our rebuilding groundfish resources.

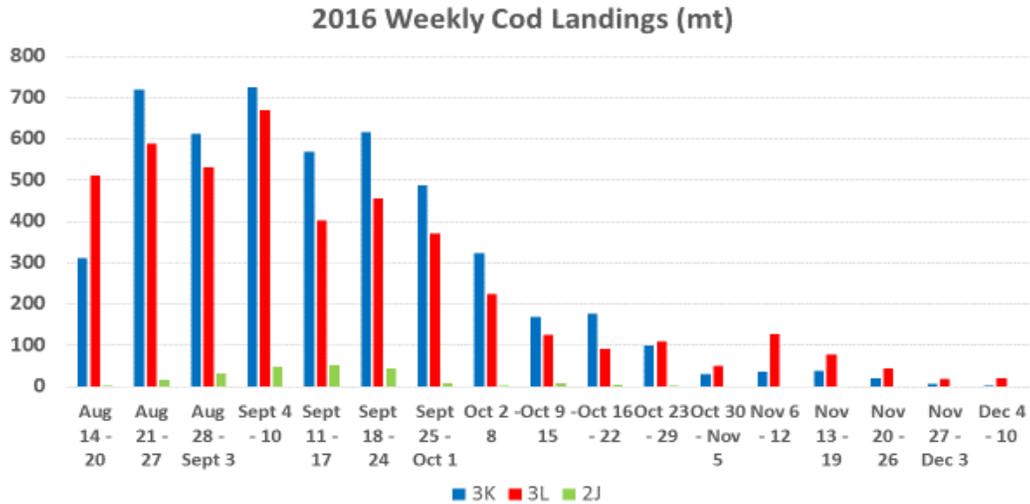
During 2016 the NL-GIDC proposed a management plan for a one year Stewardship Cod Fishery in areas 2J3KL. This plan was approved by DFO in early August 2016, with a fishery start on August 15, 2016. The elements of the 2016 NL-GIDC Plan were:

- Extended season compared to previous stewardship fisheries
- Weekly landing limits
 - 2000 lbs/week up to the beginning of September
 - 3000 lbs/week after that
- There was no specific DFO total quota. The NL-GIDC estimated there would be 14,000-15,000 t harvested for the season, however, with the August 15 start the total stewardship harvest was approximately 10,000 t.
- Removal of the requirement to fish in the harvesters home bay
- Other measures included:
 - Gear restrictions (numbers of nets and hooks)
 - Small fish protocol
 - Monitoring of Landings
 - Logbook completion

The figure below presents the landings by NAFO Division. This indicates that landings were spread fairly consistently between Divisions 3K and 3L. Landings were much lower in Div. 2J for a variety of reasons (fewer participants, availability of cod in some areas, etc.)



Landings by week for the 2016 fishery are provided below. Previous stewardship fisheries occurred with a short time frame (2-4 weeks), however the 2016 fishery occurred over 17 weeks (in the meantime, most cod was landed in 10-12 weeks). The late start for the 2016 fishery was a result of late approval of our plan by DFO. Additional work on spreading the harvest over a longer time period is required for 2017.



2017 MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL

There has been a recent science update for 2J3KL cod. This update did not include a full assessment of the stock, but included information on landings, RV surveys and tagging data. The conclusions from the update were:

- The stock continues to increase
- The reported catch approximately doubled from 2015 to 2016
- However, tagging results indicated that overall fishing mortality levels remained relatively low
- In keeping with the PA, removals should be kept to the lowest possible levels.

Given the above information and that the 2016 assessment suggested that the fishing mortality in recent years is only a small percentage of the natural mortality. Harvest levels that are associated with low levels of F should not have an overall negative impact on stock rebuilding.

For 2017 the NL-GIDC proposes the following:

- This proposal relates to a one-year management plan (2017)
- A continuation of the weekly limit approach implemented in 2016
- A key objective for 2017 is to more evenly distribute landings throughout the fishing season. Therefore the following season dates and weekly limits are proposed:
 - Season: May 15 – June 30, August 1 - December 16
 - Weekly limits:

Month	Weekly Limit Round weight (lbs)	
	3KL	2J
May	4,000	4,000
June	4,000	4,000
August	2,000	4,000
September	3,000	5,000
October	5,000*	5,000*
November	5,000*	5,000*
December	5,000*	5,000*

*These limits may change to facilitate the Council meeting its objective of more evenly distributing the harvest throughout the fishing season within the context of the overall plan.

- Removal of the restriction to fish inside 12-miles from land. As the stewardship fishery expands this restriction should be removed to avoid potential gear congestion within the bays.
- A continuation of other measures:
 - Removal of the requirement to fish within a harvesters home bay
 - Gear restrictions
 - Small fish protocol
 - Monitoring of Landings
 - Logbook completion

Note: While this plan is not associated with any specific Total Allowable Catch, the NL-GIDC estimates that this management approach for 2017 will result in removals in the range of 16,000 - 19,000 t. As was the case in 2016, the NL-GIDC are requesting DFO’s assistance in the implementation of this plan, specifically regarding the use of regulatory mechanisms (variation orders or licence conditions) to help maintain our plan within the anticipated total notional harvest levels. It is important that there be safeguards in place to ensure that fishing mortality remains at a low level to promote further rebuilding of the resource.

Measures to assist in addressing market demand for cod landed during the Stewardship Fishery (Improve quality/longer season):

1. No fishery will occur during July.
2. Those harvesters who refrain from fishing during the August 1 – September 15 period will be permitted to fish at 2 x the agreed weekly limit during the October – December period. The intent of this measure is to spread out the harvest by encouraging more fishing during autumn months.
3. Pilot project 1. Boxing of fish onboard vessels will occur at a limited number of locations with boxed fish being sealed and delivered directly to plants. Dockside monitoring and quality grading will occur inside the plant. This initiative will be reviewed at the end of 2017 to determine the feasibility for expanding this in future years.
4. Pilot project 2. The NL-GIDC will be exploring opportunities for gearing up vessels with automated hook and line gear throughout the 2017 season. This project will require additional discussion with industry and funding agencies.
5. Pilot project 3. It is proposed that a project be implemented during autumn, 2017 involving vessels fishing further from land than that observed during the fishery. The intent is to determine the commercial viability (catch rate and quality using gillnets and longlines) of harvesting and delivering raw material from locations further from shore in areas traditionally fished by the inshore fixed gear fleet. It is estimated that this project will require 200 t of cod, which is included in the overall estimate provided above.

In addition to the above, the NL-GIDC continues to support the FFAW/FSSSB quality project. A pilot project was first launched in 2014 and was extended in 2015 and 2016. The intent of the project was to examine the extent to which quality could be improved through the development of strict onboard fish handling protocols for harvesters and the introduction of best handling practices and data collection procedures in processing facilities.