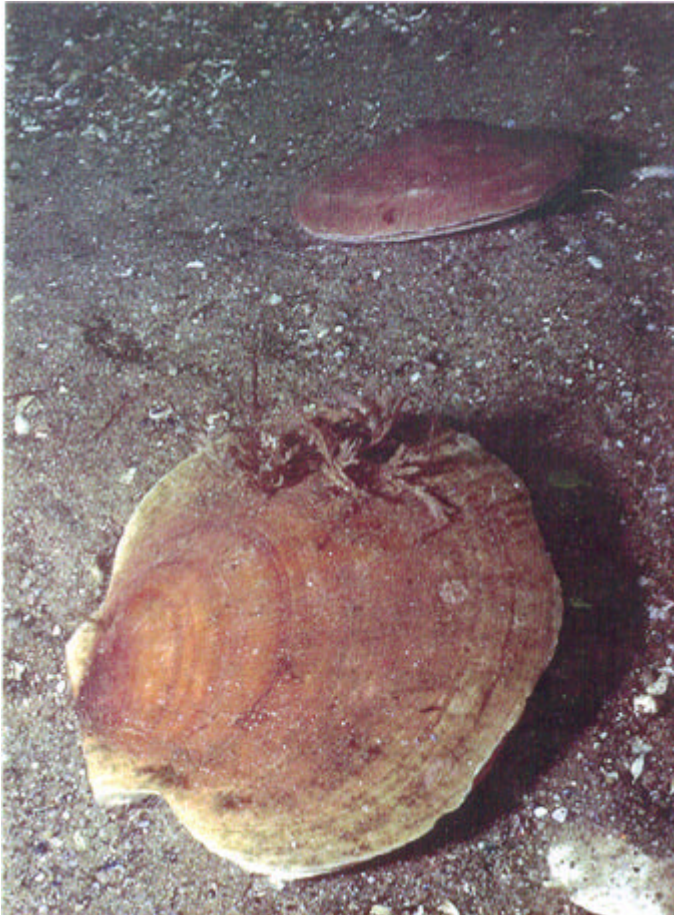


# FISHERIES DIVERSIFICATION PROGRAM

Environmental Awareness and  
Conservation Technology

Project Summary: EACT- 3.2001.DFO (FDP 340)

## Impact of Scallop Harvesting on Lobster Habitat



Canada

 GOVERNMENT OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND  
AND LABRADOR

*On February 26, 2001, a group of scallop and lobster fishermen, and representatives from the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, held a workshop in Swift Current to discuss the impact of scallop fishing on lobster habitat and to recommend possible solutions to the problem.*

## **Introduction:**

Lobsters have been harvested commercially in Placentia Bay since the beginning of the last century. Some lobster fishers have experienced a decline in catch rates in recent years. The total annual catch has also declined. Some fishers have suggested that dragging for scallop has damaged lobster habitat.

Since the moratorium on cod fishing was implemented in Placentia Bay in 1993, many fishers have turned to scallop dragging. The scallop fishery has supplemented the incomes of fishers who traditionally depended on cod for their livelihood. Many lobster fishers also harvest scallops after the spring lobster fishery is over.

The impact that scallop dragging has on lobster stocks found in the same area has been studied in other areas of Atlantic Canada but it has not been studied in Placentia Bay. Lobster fishers have been raising the issue at Lobster Advisory Committee meetings for a number of years. So far, no consensus has been reached on the extent and seriousness of the problem, or on what might be done about it. Consequently, no action has been taken.

In the fall of 2000, stakeholders in the lobster and scallop fisheries in Placentia Bay requested that a special workshop be set up to discuss this issue more thoroughly. The need for a workshop was also discussed at a quarterly meeting of DFO's Fisheries Management Branch Working Group on Responsible Fishing.

## **Workshop Discussion**

At the beginning of the workshop, participants viewed twenty minutes of underwater videotape of scallop and lobster in their natural habitat. It was clear from the video that while scallop and lobster may inhabit the same general area, their immediate habitats within that area are very different throughout most of the yearly cycle. Scallop live on sandy and gravel bottom areas, while lobster live mainly in areas with rough, rocky bottom. However, there is evidence that lobster move onto typical scallop habitat during their annual molting period, in July, and August.

Scallop fishers at the workshop said they rarely caught any lobsters in their scallop dragging gear. In their opinion, there are many other reasons, besides scallop fishing, for the decline in lobster stocks and landings in Placentia Bay. These include poaching, increased lobster fishing effort since the cod decline, and by-catches in lumpfish and blackback (winter flounder) gillnets.

Lobster fishers felt that scallop fishing should be closed during two critical periods of the year: 1) during the lobster fishing season, to prevent gear conflicts; 2) during July and August, the lobster molting period.

While no studies relating to this issue have been carried out in Newfoundland, studies done elsewhere in the Maritime Provinces are considered to have some value in terms of assessing the situation in Newfoundland waters. Copies of reports from five studies were distributed to workshop participants:

- Robichaud, D. A., A. M. Williamson, and D. E. Graham. 1987. *Characteristics of the St. Marys Bay [N. S.] Lobster Stock in Relation to Scallop Gear Impact.*
- Pringle, J. D. and D. J. Jones. 1980. *The Interaction of Lobster, Scallop, and Irish Moss Fisheries off Borden, Prince Edward Island.*
- Searratt, D. J. 1975. *Observations on Lobster and Scallop Near Pictou, Nova Scotia.*
- Roddick, D. L. and R. J. Miller. 1992. *Spatial and Temporal Overlap of the American Lobster and Sea Scallop as related to the Impact of Inshore Scallop Dragging.*
- Jamieson, G. S. and A. Campbell. 1981. *Sea Scallop Fishing Impact on American Lobster in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.*

### Workshop participants

Brian Penney	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Arnold's Cove
Leonard Picco	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Arnold's Cove
Baxter Williams	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Garden Cove
Cecil Penney	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Arnold's Cove
Tom Whittle	fisherman - lobster & scallop	St. Bernard's
Carter Baker	fisherman - lobster	St. Bernard's
Andrew Hynes	fisherman - lobster	English Hr. East
Gary Kearley	fisherman - lobster & scallop	English Hr. East
George Hussey	fisherman - lobster & scallop	North Hr.
Barry Crocker	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Swift Current
Kenneth Hickey	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Southern Hr.
Randy Emberly	fisherman - lobster & scallop	Southern Hr.
Harvey Slade	fisherman - lobster & scallop	North Hr.
Pious Power	FFAWU	Burin
Aloysius Billings	Fisheries Field Representative	DFA, Clarenville
Lou Ryan	Area Chief, Resource Management - Southern	DFO, Grand Bank
Gerry Ennis	Section Head - Shellfish, Fisheries Science	DFO, St. John's
Tony Blanchard	A/Staff Officer - Shellfish, Fisheries Management	DFO, St. John's
Gerry Brothers	Chief, Conservation & Technology	DFO, St. John's
Max Eddy	Fishery Officer	DFO, Arnold's Cove
Tilman Bieger	Detachment Supervisor, Placentia	DFO, Placentia

## Summary and Recommendations

Participants at the workshop agreed to a recommendation that fishing for scallop in the bottom of Placentia Bay be closed from April 1, 2001, to August 31, 2001.

The bottom of Placentia Bay is defined as inside a line from Point Verde on the east side of the bay, to Red Hr. Head on the west side.

The object of the closure is two-fold.

- To prevent conflict between the mobile scallop dragging gear and the thousands of fixed-gear pots, buoys, and moorings used to fish lobster during the annual harvest in April, May, and June.
- The July and August closure is required for conservation reasons, to protect lobsters from injury by scallop fishing gear during their annual molting period. (At this time of year, lobsters are known to migrate out of their usual habitat onto sandy and gravel bottom where scallop are normally found and fished.)

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### Partner/Contributors:

- Fishery, Food and Allied Workers Union
- Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Program Planning & Coordination Division  
Fisheries Management Sector  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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### For further information on this project:

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**The \$10 million Fisheries Diversification Program is part of the \$81.5 million Canada-Newfoundland Agreement respecting the Economic Development and Restructuring Initiative, announced in August, 1999. The main thrust of the Fisheries Diversification Program is industry-wide research and development initiatives that reflect the economic development priorities of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishing industry.**

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