

## DRAFT

# PRAWN DEMONSTRATION FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL

**Prawn demonstration pilot management based on time and tonnage limits using the spawner index to ensure conservation.**

DFO science has told us that there is no direct way to assign a poundage to the spawner index. For the duration of this quota pilot program we therefore propose simply using a "tonnage target" upon which to base individual fishermen's allotments. We want to be clear that since there is no way to assign a TAC to prawns that this "tonnage target" is just that, a target not a guarantee of catch to each individual. The spawner index will still be used to determine when closures are needed not whether or not fishermen have reached the target.

The first opening would be May 1 to July 15. Target tonnage to be taken would be 850 tons, which is one half of the 1700 tons DFO is presently suggesting. The intent is to ensure that not so many of the prawns are taken prematurely and to spread the fishery out to develop markets. Fishermen could not carryover poundage from one opening to the next to simplify management and because this is ample time to catch this quantity of product.

The second opening would be July 16 to Sept 30. Target tonnage to be taken would be an additional 850 tons for a total to Sept 30th of 1700 tons. This 1700 ton target should be quite easily to achieve. We will have the benefit of more prawns growing to a heavier weight before capture and this target number is well below the average of the last three years. Also we anticipate including incentives to promote the full development of all the available prawn ground that is presently underutilised or not used at all. Again no carryovers allowed. It is understood that reaching this target number is not guaranteed but rather is dependant on the spawner index remaining at harvestable levels.

On Sept 30th we will have completed two openings and we feel that there is a

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very good chance that there will still be a harvestable surplus of prawns remaining. We therefore propose a third and final opening from Oct 1 to Dec 15. The target tonnage to be taken in this time block would be conservatively negotiated based on the percentage of areas remaining open. The intent here is to allow the quota pilot to harvest, as closely as possible, to abundance. We are quite confident that given a normal year it will be possible to fully meet this target, however there are no guarantees since the spawner index will close areas as needed. This approach will put in place a system to harvest most of the surplus and reduce losses to the fishery that a conservatively set arbitrary cap would impose. No carryovers to the next year due to the short lived nature of prawns.

This is a quota system adjusted to fit the short lived prawn using real time abundance based management and the spawner index system that is proven to protect the stocks.

We realise that there will be something of a race to fish at the start of each opening, however boats will have to stop fishing as they get their quota so this style of fishing will become easier to manage as boats drop out. This is the direct opposite of the present situation of less and less area for the same number of boats. This system will reduce the tendency to keep marginal areas open to avoid concentration of boats thus simplifying and improving management decisions. The three opening design of this system ensures that individuals cannot take all their poundage in a short time at the start of the year thus increasing confidence among fishermen that they don't need to race to get their fish.

It may be advisable to provide incentives to discourage larger vessels from staying in the Gulf. Possibly allowing 10% more quota if they fish outside the Gulf would help. Another option could be to issue quota based on past areas history (gulf 60%, north 20%, WCV115%, QCI 5% etc.) and let fishermen trade among themselves to get quota in the area of choice. That is how the trawl fishery operates and they presently do as many as 3000 trades among themselves per year. We suggest 25% extra quota for fishing in presently underused offshore areas with the intent of developing the fishery to its fullest potential while leaving more room inshore.

After the season DFO managers should meet with Caucas to assess the success of the program and recommend changes up or down in the tonnage targets for the next year.

That is the short version of this proposal.

We want to make several things clear regarding the present four month and 1700

ton proposal DFO has suggested to us.

1. A four month season will not be of sufficient duration to offer significant advantages over present therefore the pilot will not be able to show it's potential and could be doomed to fail. From a fishermen's point of view there is no reason not to race to get all his fish before the fishery closes at 1700 tons.
2. We are not willing to arbitrarily forgo 20% of our catch off the top. We must develop a method of fishing that will reap the benefits of this new style of fishing and have the flexibility to take advantage of abundance while it is available.

Another question to consider is how many guardians are needed. Our feeling is that we may be able to vary the number of guardians due to the greatly decreased intensity of effort, especially as fishing progresses and boats drop out. It may be possible to set up the contract with JOT, or whoever is service provider at the time, to allow this flexibility. We are also asking J O Thomas for their opinion of this proposal.

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For the Prawn Quota Proposal