

Bulletin

February 2023

Foreign Ownership Petition Launched

The United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union has launched a Parliamentary

Petition requesting an immediate stop to any further foreign ownership or beneficial interest in Canadian licenses and quotas.

The petition aims to ban any further transfer of Canadian commercial fishing licenses and quotas to foreign ownership or foreign beneficial

interest. Canada currently has no limitations on foreign ownership of commercial fishing licenses and quotas, causing economic losses to domestic fish processing and processing jobs in Canada, and displacing Canadian owner-operator fish harvesters.

The petition supports a recommendation made by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' 2019 Report on Sharing Risks and Benefits.

The petition will be open for signature until March 22. Go to UFAWU-Unifor.org for info on signing the petition!

UFAWU Attends FFC Gathering

The Fisheries for Communities Gathering 3.0 event, held in Victoria February 22 & 23, brought together stakeholders from the West Coast fishing industry including fish harvesters, First Nations leaders, fish mongers, chefs and small business owners, with guest speaker representatives of the Provincial Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship, Members of the Standing Committee of

Fisheries and Oceans, and of DFO. UFAWU-Unifor Staff and Leadership participated heavily in the event, speaking on panels and leading discussions about fisheries policy.

The event focused on promoting change in West Coast fisheries policy to protect and benefit local fish harvesters, First Nations, and coastal communities, reflecting a needed shift away from the current model which supports large corporations and investors. Event attendees worked together to reach an agreement on a policy document that out-

lined how the shift to an owner-operator licensing system should work.

MPs Mel Arnold, Ken Hardie, and Lisa Marie Barron (all members of FOPO) and various speakers from the commercial fishing and seafood industry shared their perspectives on the industry's challenges and opportu-

nities. The event highlighted the importance of small-scale fisheries in delivering healthy sustainable seafood, supporting local economies, and connecting communities to their local ecosystems.

Stay tuned for more info following the event at fisheriesforcommunities.org!



UFAWU Responds to MPA Endorsement Announcement

Canada, BC, and 15 First Nations, the governing partners of the Northern Shelf Bioregion Marine Protected Area Network proposal, officially announced their endorsement of the Network Action Plan for the MPA at the IMPAC5 Forum this month in Vancouver.

The Northern Shelf Bioregion encompasses 2/3rds of BC's coast, from Campbell River to the Alaskan Border, with the MPA Network plan claiming 40% of that area for protection. With objectives stated for both conservation and reconciliation, the MPA Network will see closures for a wide variety of purpose, ranging from protection of habitat and migration corridors to protection of areas of First Nations' cultural significance.

First Nations' Food, Social and Ceremonial Commercial fisheries will not be affected by the MPA Network but the future of commercial and recreational fisheries in each of the 277 MPA plan areas remains unclear. Man-

agement measures to address what fisheries will be permitted in each of the distinct areas are now to be determined in part by DFO's assessment of protection targets in the context of each fishery's activity.

"The fear is that many harvesters, most who are 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th generation fishers, will be forced out of the areas they traditionally fish, with no choice but to either crowd into another area or to leave the fishing industry altogether. The resulting concentration of fishing effort in the areas left open will result in shorter fishery openings and reduced catch — a blow to the bottom line that many would not survive. Our hope is that we can move toward open conversations with First Nations about common goals and strengthen the relationship between First Nations and small-scale fish harvesters. Our role in this monumental initiative is to work collaboratively with harvesters," UFAWU President James Lawson says.

UFAWU Business Agent Emily Orr has been representing commercial fish harvesters throughout the Stakeholder Engagement of the Northern Shelf Bioregion MPA proposal and has been closely

linked to the project in that capacity for more than four years.

"Stakeholders, in this case commercial fish harvesters, were provided an opportunity to review the nearly 300 distinct areas slated for potential commercial fisheries closures using an interactive chart program. Harvesters made location-specific requests for slight boundary adjustments and in some cases proposed alternative areas for closures to allow for sustainable and well-managed fisheries to occur in concert with the protection measures. These inputs were crafted meticulously, with dutiful inspection and consideration of the MPA protection targets," Orr says.

"The premise is that if we provide feedback and work together inside of the process, that the finished product will reflect that collaboration. Without management measures included in the current draft scenario, it remains unclear what the extent of the impact will be on commercial fisheries access. Our aspirations at this stage are to collaborate on the unfinished terms of this plan with the Governing Partners and our small-scale fish harvesters."

Conservation and sustainability are cornerstones of viable fisheries, and arguably matter most to commercial fish harvesters. Commercial fisheries in Canada are already subject to DFO's precautionary approach framework; management measures to control fishing effort, manage fish stocks, and facilitate closure areas for protection of habitat are all part of that existing approach.

"It is possible to balance fish and habitat conservation with preservation of our fisheries economy — this requires the inclusion and input of the commercial fishing community," Orr says.

The UFAWU remains hopeful that the MPA Network design will reflect the critical role of BC's sustainable seafood sector in our Province's food security and for the health of its coastal communities, and looks toward engaging collaboratively in the spirit of co-governance as Canada approaches a new era of fisheries management.

Public engagement on the Northern Shelf Bioregion MPA Network occurred in September and November of 2022, giving two months to the broader coastal community to respond to the MPA plan.



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