



MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING IN DFO MARITIMES REGION

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

2024

FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

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Canada

Marine Spatial Planning Engagement: What We Heard

Executive Summary

This What We Heard Report describes the marine spatial planning (MSP) engagement efforts by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) throughout the summer and fall of 2023 and into the winter of 2024 to support the development and publication of the first-generation Marine Spatial Plan for the Scotian Shelf and Bay of Fundy Planning Area. The report summarizes the comments, reactions and feedback that the department received over the course of this engagement period from a variety of government departments, rightsholders, stakeholders, industry representatives and other interested organizations and individuals. Many engagement participants expressed general hope and support for MSP and identified ways in which MSP could add value to decision making. Other feedback centered around the importance of integrated management and early engagement, MSP's lack of regulatory authority, ways to improve existing decision-support tools, and topics or geographic areas that should be given greater consideration. Recommendations for the future and next steps are summarized. The report also includes a series of appendices describing the engagement materials used, participants contacted, responses to survey questions, and frequently asked questions. Readers who participated in MSP engagement meetings or workshops should find their feedback and comments reflected in this report and in the first-generation Marine Spatial Plan. The recommendations captured here will be important for shaping future marine planning efforts and will be carefully considered by DFO as this work continues.

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Introduction

Throughout the summer and fall of 2023 and into the winter of 2024, DFO undertook efforts to engage with Indigenous organizations, other government departments, environmental non-government organizations, marine users and stakeholders in the Maritimes Region on the development of the department's first-generation Marine Spatial Plan. MSP is a process for supporting the sustainable management of ocean spaces by seeking to balance ecological, economic, cultural and social objectives. MSP in Canada does not replace existing authorities or management arrangements in the marine environment but seeks to add value to decision-making processes and improve coordination among them. DFO has been advancing MSP in five regions across Canada, including the Maritimes Region. DFO Maritimes Region's planning area corresponds to the region's administrative boundaries and encompasses the offshore Scotian Shelf and portions of the Gulf of Maine, the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, and the Bay of Fundy (Figure 1).

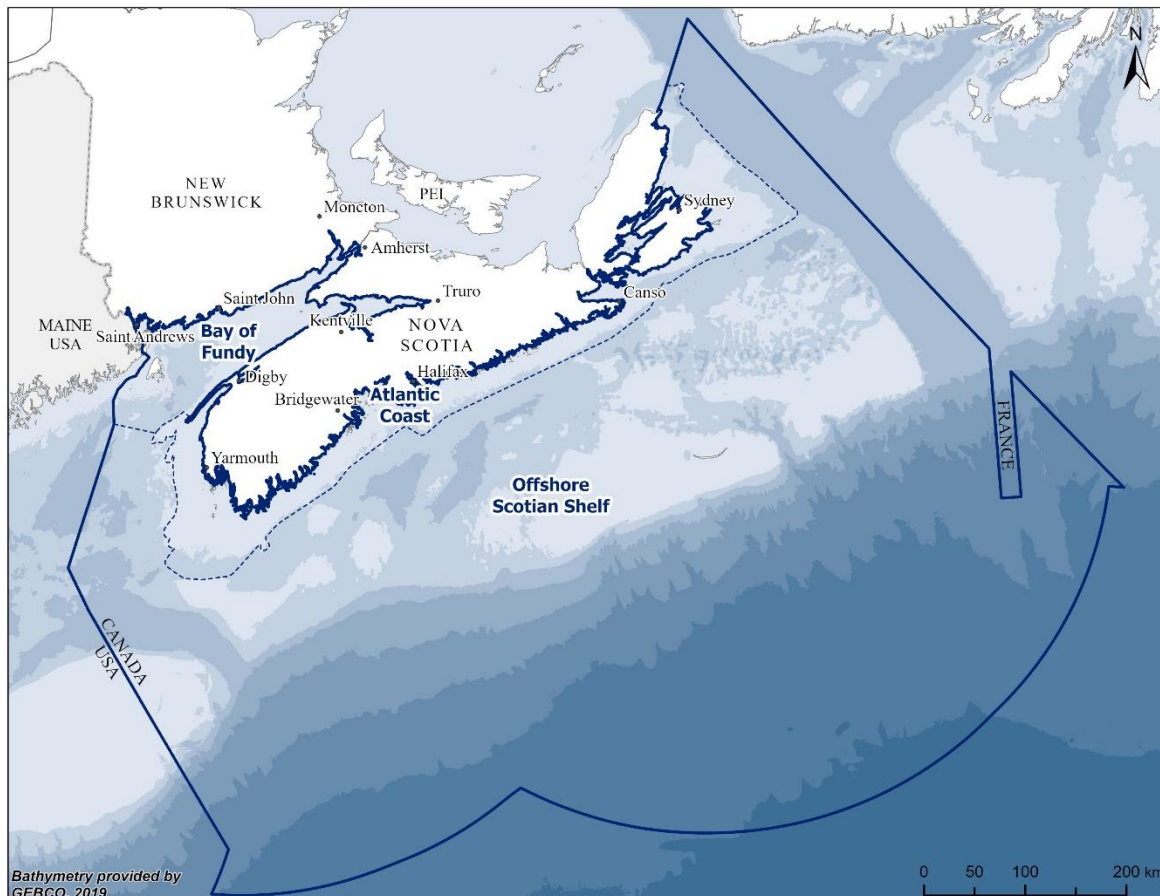


Figure 1: Boundary of the Scotian Shelf and Bay of Fundy planning area including the Bay of Fundy, Atlantic Coast and offshore Scotian Shelf.

Engagement on MSP has been an ongoing process. From 2020 to 2023, DFO held meetings with marine users and stakeholders to describe DFO’s approach to MSP and better understand the priorities and interests of partners and stakeholders regarding MSP. DFO also signed Contribution Agreements with several Indigenous organizations in the planning area, which are described in section 1.1.1. Between June 2023 and March 2024, DFO undertook targeted engagement on the MSP process and draft planning documents in order to produce the first-generation Marine Spatial Plan in 2024.

Engagement opportunities like the ones described in this document are critical for ensuring that input from a range of rightsholders and stakeholders is considered and helps to shape current and future work. Continued dialogue, meaningful engagement, and relationship building will help foster a sense of shared ownership in MSP and the Marine Spatial Plan and ensure future decision-making and planning reflects the interests and priorities of a range of ocean users.

The purpose of this What We Heard report is to provide a summary of the feedback DFO received during MSP engagement from June 2023 to March 2024. This report will also explain how the feedback was incorporated into the first-generation Marine Spatial Plan or how it will be considered in the future.

1. OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

This section describes DFO’s approach to MSP engagement. The purpose of the engagement efforts was to ensure that the interests, concerns, priorities and needs from a variety of stakeholders, rightsholders, marine users, and the general public were heard as DFO worked to develop the first-generation Marine Spatial Plan.

1.1 Engagement approach

From mid-2023 to late winter of 2024, DFO hosted a series of both sector-specific meetings and multi-sector workshops on MSP. Sector-specific meetings were targeted towards individuals from one sector or organization, whereas the multi-sector workshops were open to invited representatives from various industries, groups and organizations with a marine interest, as well as members of the public. Meeting formats varied. Most were held either virtually using Microsoft Teams or using a hybrid approach (in-person and virtual). Three multi-sector workshops were hosted in November of 2023, two of which were online using Microsoft Teams and one was in person at the Halifax Central Library in Halifax, Nova Scotia. DFO staff also attended a number of other standing meetings to deliver presentations on MSP and answer questions. These included meetings with members of the fishing industry in Maritimes Region, other federal departments, and the Governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

The goals of these MSP engagement sessions were to:

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1. **communicate DFO’s regional approach to MSP (i.e., support for sector-based planning and management).**
 2. **highlight how MSP is being applied in the region.**
 3. **demonstrate how to use the Marine Planning Atlas and discuss data and information for MSP.**
 4. **receive input on regional MSP priorities and scope, to be reflected in the Plan.**
 5. **discuss what MSP processes and governance could look like in the future.**

Feedback was collected in a variety of ways. First, comments made by participants during the meetings and workshops were noted by DFO meeting organizers. DFO also invited direct written or verbal feedback from meeting participants after the meetings. Finally, DFO requested feedback from meeting participants via an online survey using Microsoft Forms. For the complete list of survey questions and answers, see Appendix A.

For all meetings and workshops aside from the in-person workshop held in Halifax, the agenda was split into different topics. For each topic there was a presentation delivered by DFO followed by a question and discussion period. The topics were as follows, usually presented in this order:

1. Context and overview
 - i. MSP goals and objectives, describe the regional MSP approach.
2. The Marine Spatial Plan
 - i. Description of the Plan document itself.
3. Linkages between MSP and other planning processes.
 - i. Marine conservation and data to inform offshore wind planning were discussed as applications of MSP.
4. MSP Products
 - i. A showcase of the various MSP decision-support tools, with a focus on the Canada Marine Planning Atlas and MSP Science tools.
5. MSP in the future
 - i. A discussion of what participants viewed as important for MSP going forward, with guiding questions.

1.1.1. MSP Contribution Agreements

DFO’s Oceans Management Contribution Program provides funding to support outreach, monitoring and stewardship, and capacity building among partners in support of activities related to MSP, marine conservation, and marine environmental quality. To enhance the capacity for Indigenous Groups to fully participate in MSP, the Marine Planning and Conservation (MPC) Program set up Contribution Agreements with four different groups over 3 and 4-year periods, beginning in 2019 and 2020. Contribution Agreements were established with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq, the

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office, the Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council, the Peskotomuhkati Nation and the Wolastoqey Nation of New Brunswick.

The goals and activities outlined in the agreements were largely centered around capacity building, community engagement and education, gathering Indigenous Knowledge, and participating regularly in meetings with DFO to discuss MSP and marine conservation interests. For many groups, capacity enhancement was enabled through hiring additional staff, increased attendance at meetings, community workshops and training, and the advancement of knowledge of MSP. The agreements were intended to enable a more collaborative relationship between DFO and agreement recipients, and information sharing will continue into the future.

1.2 Who we heard from

A total of 104 different organizations from different sectors, organization types or government bodies were invited to participate in either a one-on-one MSP engagement meeting or attend one of the multi-sector MSP workshops. They included municipalities in Nova Scotia, Indigenous organizations, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), the provincial governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, academia and research organizations, and marine industries including the fishing industry. For a breakdown of the sectors, industries or organization types contacted, see Appendix B. Of these groups and organizations, 41 attended an MSP meeting or workshop and eight provided written or verbal feedback either via the engagement survey or by email. Verbal feedback was also directly expressed by attendees during the meetings and workshops. Some additional organizations who were not originally contacted but who expressed interest in the subject matter also participated in some of the multi-sector workshops. In addition, some individuals who attended the in-person workshop did not leave a name or affiliation. As a result, actual attendance at the multi-sector MSP workshops was slightly higher than reported.

Engagement with other federal government departments, the Province of Nova Scotia, and members of Scotian Shelf and Bay of Fundy fishing organizations also took place through previously scheduled coordination meetings where DFO shared information on MSP and answered questions. The thoughts and comments raised during these meetings are also captured in this report.

1.3 Analysis and organization

This report provides a written summary of the information received throughout the engagement period, with supporting information provided in a series of appendices at the end of the document. Section 2.1 summarizes feedback received in support of MSP, while sections 2.2 to 2.6 below roughly follow the structure of the MSP engagement meetings and workshops as they were held to provide a narrative description of the overall comments and feedback received in response to each section. In

addition, sub-section 2.2.1 outlines how DFO engaged specifically with First Nations and Indigenous organizations.

The feedback and commentary described throughout section 2 is from all formats under which DFO received input (i.e., verbal comments transcribed into meeting notes, survey responses, and written responses). This feedback was carefully reviewed, and similar comments or those part of a clear theme were grouped together and described in aggregate. Other comments that were not part of an obvious theme were simply described, with an attempt to ensure a certain level of flow and organization between ideas. Bulleted lists were used to communicate a variety of ideas, suggestions, and priorities that were identified by meeting participants. Some editorial changes were made to the feedback in this section to ensure clarity and to allow the information to fit into a narrative format; however care was taken to ensure the meaning of the comments was not changed. Words contained in square brackets were added by DFO for clarity, but all efforts were made to avoid altering the original meaning or intention of the comments.

Appendix A contains the full responses to the survey questions that DFO Maritimes circulated to meeting participants. The survey responses are provided exactly as they were received, with some small editorial corrections to a small number of responses to assist with clarity and comprehension. No identifying characteristics accompany the responses.

Finally, Appendix C contains answers to questions raised during the engagement period.

2. WHAT WE HEARD

2.1 Support for MSP

General comments of support for DFO's MSP efforts were noted throughout the meetings, workshops and surveys. Some participants noted DFO's long-term efforts to advance ocean management by pursuing Integrated Management, marine conservation, and now MSP. Appreciation for the connective approach DFO is taking on MSP was expressed, and participants hoped that MSP would move forward positively. It was noted that to be most effective, other planning processes should feed into MSP. Participants expressed seeing value in pursuing MSP and identified the following ways in which MSP could be useful:

- Support decision making.
- Assist with better interprovincial cooperation on marine issues.
- Help take stock of current activities and stakeholders operating in the marine space and therefore plan for future economic development opportunities.
- Ensure decisions are based on all types of knowledge and information, not just traditional science.

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- Conservation planning and the use of waters in Maritimes Region.
 - Understand how resources could be better managed in the future to help restore them to previous levels of abundance.
 - Identify cumulative effects and help decision-makers understand how to address them.

2.2 MSP context and overview, and DFO's approach to MSP engagement

Given the range of federal initiatives underway, capacity challenges in engaging with DFO on MSP were expressed. For some, prioritization of what to engage on depends on mandate, capacity and the determined urgency or impact of the topic in question. A lack of response should not be indicative of either support or endorsement. Others noted they would like to better understand how DFO is engaging with First Nations and Indigenous Groups on MSP and what consultations will be had after the first-generation Plan is complete to ensure all rightsholders and stakeholders are involved. With respect to engagement with First Nations, provinces, and stakeholders, one commentor noted that much of it seems to be carried out via DFO-specific channels and does not necessarily include other MSP partners.

2.2.1. Indigenous Engagement and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights

Rights and values

Indigenous groups that were engaged expressed the importance of sufficient, meaningful consultation and engagement with the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. Without the sufficient involvement of Indigenous groups, MSP will lack important knowledge. The importance of understanding and upholding Aboriginal and Treaty rights was also emphasized. Furthermore, discussions of MSP governance should consider Indigenous governance structures. The importance of land acknowledgements were also noted. Finally, it was expressed that [Indigenous] values and practices must be included in future impact assessments.

How to engage

The importance of local, early engagement and consultation with Indigenous people when making decisions in the marine space was voiced. Indigenous organizations and First Nation communities must be included at the start of any process. To that end, comments were received that suggested DFO could be better about being proactive in its communication and relationship building. While Grants and Contributions were helpful, they were not always seen as an adequate method for providing information.

Suggestions on how to engage on MSP included in-person meetings, workshops, and virtual meetings. MSP is a topic of interest among certain Indigenous organizations and there is eagerness to continue those conversations in the coming years

2.3 The Marine Spatial Plan

With regards to the draft Marine Spatial Plan itself, some reviewers noted a need to more clearly articulate how the Plan links to existing initiatives such as the Blue Economy Strategy and Marine Conservation Targets. Considering all the various related DFO initiatives underway, the Plan would benefit from further clarity around how these initiatives overlap and link to one another. Further explaining how the framework for the Plan itself was developed based on DFO's National Guidance for MSP was also suggested.

Some comments reflected on how the document read as a DFO document rather than one with much input from MSP partners which felt out of step with the collaborative aim of MSP. There was a lack of clarity expressed about who MSP "partners" are, and that any mention of a "partner" in MSP needs to be based a true, existing partnership.

The lack of a formal policy or legislative framework for MSP in Canada was raised on multiple occasions, and participants questioned MSP's legal authority and therefore its effectiveness. Participants noted that DFO policies should recognize MSP and that there should be stronger legislation to implement MSP to ensure effectiveness. Some commenters suggested the need for more details on how the Plan can enhance or assist the implementation of existing monitoring and conservation strategies and how it can influence decision making. Similarly, it was suggested that there should be more of a requirement for sectors to consider [the Marine Spatial Plan] in their own planning and decision making.

Other suggestions and comments raised by meeting participants on the Marine Spatial Plan and DFO's approach to MSP included the following:

- The importance of integrated management. A lack of integration with other projects and government departments and levels could create barriers to effectiveness and implementation.
- The potential for jurisdictional issues to arise. Early identification of such issues will be important to support effective intergovernmental coordination and collaboration.
- Concerns about federal spatial conservation planning and implementation in advance of an established MSP process.
- The need for processes and tools to support organizations in Maritimes Region so that they can develop their own Marine Spatial Plans for smaller, more localized areas.
- The importance of developing a measure of success for MSP, with clearly identified goals and objectives. Without this, there will be little way of knowing if MSP is successful in the future.

Numerous suggestions were provided on how to facilitate MSP implementation and action. Among these were the development of a multi-sector working committee to support Plan implementation, and that DFO consider developing advisory committees to better understand the perspectives of others.

2.4 Linkages Between MSP and Other Planning Processes

In response to descriptions of how MSP has been applied through marine conservation network planning and DFO's Marxan with Zones analysis as a case study for offshore wind, multiple comments were made about the importance of using the most up to date fishing data available. Concerns were raised about decisions being made based on data that are retrospective. While participants saw value in DFO's MSP work to inform and support future offshore wind planning, they expressed that available fishing data should be used with caution as they do not tell the full story of fishing activity in the region, nor do they provide an indication of where fish stocks may move in the future.

Certain groups expressed a preference for being engaged on DFO's Marxan with Zones analysis as a case study for offshore wind, and MSP more broadly, earlier in the process. The importance of including Indigenous knowledge in any kind of analysis was also emphasized.

On the topic of offshore wind, the importance of identifying knowledge gaps was emphasized, given that offshore wind is a new use for the ocean space in Atlantic Canada. DFO was encouraged to systematically identify knowledge gaps. Some groups also advocated that offshore wind development not be allowed in marine protected areas, that it should be located in areas where there is the least amount of disruption to other ocean users. Others felt that if offshore wind were to be found incompatible with certain activities or species, this would be a barrier to renewable energy development. Nevertheless, participants seemed to find value in DFO's Marxan with Zones analysis as a case study for offshore wind, expressing that this could help reduce conflicts and that MSP should be the first tool used to address spatial conflicts in the marine environment. Finally, one participant expressed concerns about similar challenges arising with offshore wind as with tidal energy in the Bay of Fundy.

2.5 MSP Atlas and Decision-Support Tools

Many comments and feedback on the topic of MSP decision-support tools centered around the utility of the Canada Marine Planning Atlas. While there was overall interest and support for the Atlas, for some it was seen as too high-level for community-level marine planners and users. Others noted it lacked coverage in specific areas and did not offer sufficient detail in certain locations, potentially limiting its use as a planning tool for a specific area by certain users. One participant said they expected more relevant layers and more defined base maps with detailed location information. When participants were asked what else should be considered for inclusion in the Marine Planning Atlas, the following suggestions were made:

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- Marine archaeology.
 - Mi'kmaq place names.
 - More place-based knowledge (depending on privacy restrictions).
 - Sources of data held by other organizations, if they can be made open source.

For one group in particular, the Minas Basin was identified as a priority site for additional data and information. Additional suggestions are listed in Appendix A.

Overall, the MSP decision-support tools were seen as useful. One participant saw value in an increased ability to understand how different uses in the marine environment interact as it would help with better planning and decision making. With regards specifically to the Strategic Ecosystem Activity Compatibility Assessment Tool (SEACAT), it was suggested that the tool's usefulness would be improved if the tool could assist with accessing existing research using a search function. There was enthusiasm for future training and learning opportunities regarding the MSP decision-support tools, particularly the Atlas and the Canadian Extreme Water Level Adaptation Tool (CAN-EWLAT).

2.6 MSP in the Future

During the portion of the meetings that explored MSP in the future and what participants would like to see, there were some recurring themes that emerged from the comments received. These are summarized in the sections below.

Legislative basis for MSP

The legislative authority of MSP was mentioned a number of times, with participants noting that it will be important for DFO to understand how MSP might fit into existing policies or legislation relating to the marine environment given that MSP does not replace existing authorities but is meant to enhance them. Leaving MSP solely a voluntary tool risks little uptake and lack of effectiveness.

Bringing people together/engagement

MSP was seen as an opportunity to bring people together to discuss management of the marine environment.

The importance of starting from a place of shared understanding and vision and breaking down colonial views was expressed. Time and proper communication will be key to build up the relationships required to achieving this. The importance of communication was also raised in terms of ensuring audiences with varying levels of subject matter knowledge are provided the resources to build their knowledge of MSP in order to participate fully.

Coming together was also seen as key to creating an effective Marine Spatial Plan. Creating a set of principles that are mutually agreed-upon by MSP participants could be a way to foster a sense of shared ownership and encourage “buy-in” by all groups interested in MSP.

Integrated approach to management

There was strong support for taking a holistic, integrated approach to management so that governments and other MSP participants avoid working in a siloed manner that struggles to properly consider all the social, economic and ecological components of an ecosystem or area. How these will be weighted in decision making will be an important consideration. This importance was also highlighted with regards to properly managing the land-sea interface. As such, it was suggested that future Plans could be expanded to include the integration of coastal management. A holistic, value-driven, integrated approach was suggested as a subject area for future discussion.

Geographic areas in need of greater attention

When asked which areas participants viewed with greater priority or as potentially good candidates for MSP in the future, participants named the following:

- Inner Bay of Fundy watershed (important for conservation, species at risk).
- The Minas Channel/ Minas Basin (seen as data-sparse).
- Bras d’Or Lakes.
- All of Mi’kma’ki is a priority.
- Bay of Fundy and Northumberland Strait (suggested as good test sites for MSP).
- Areas of importance for species at risk (e.g., North Atlantic right whale, Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic almon).
- Conservation areas (i.e., marine protected areas).
- Southwest Nova Scotia coastline.
- Bay of Fundy.
- Halifax Regional Municipality.

Other suggestions

Some other suggestions for how MSP could be improved or applied in the future included:

- Taking an evidence-based approach to decision making.
- Supporting organizations in the Maritimes Region so that they can develop their own marine spatial plans; offer tools and processes that are more applicable to smaller areas in the planning area.
- Help decision makers weigh and prioritize competing interests in marine spaces and that decisions [be] driven by sustainability.

In addition, marine archaeology was identified as a priority topic that MSP could address in the future. There was also an interest expressed in exploring an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) that spans terrestrial, riverine, estuarine and marine environments within a territory.

Future engagement

Many groups and individuals expressed an interest in remaining involved in MSP. Suggestions about the format of future engagement were varied, with workshops being suggested the most often. A multi-sector working committee for MSP was also suggested. There was frequent interest expressed in receiving tutorials or training on the Marine Planning Atlas. The full list of suggestions for future engagement received via responses to the survey are provided in Appendix B.

3. REFINING THE PLAN & NEXT STEPS

Since the conclusion of DFO's MSP engagement efforts on the draft Marine Spatial Plan, the Marine Planning and Conservation Program team has used the feedback received to refine the Plan to enhance clarity, provide more information on specific topics, improve the flow of the document, and update the text where required.

Some of the suggestions provided during the engagement sessions were taken into consideration and are being addressed directly. These include the creation of a search function for the SEACAT tool, and exploring additional data layers for the Atlas that were suggested as priorities for certain groups. Much of the feedback sought by DFO is forward-looking in nature and will therefore be important for future marine planning work.

The first-generation Marine Spatial Plan was revised and completed in the spring of 2024. Following publication of the Plan, DFO will continue to identify opportunities for marine planning in Maritimes Region. Marine planning will occur in collaboration with other governments, First Nations and Indigenous organizations, marine users, stakeholders and rightsholders. Implementation may occur using different tools and approaches, such as shared work plans, funding arrangements, and the establishment of governance tables. Feedback about how DFO should engage groups in the future, such as through working groups or workshops, will help to inform next steps to foster collaborative approaches to MSP. Additional updates on DFO's marine planning work and discussions or workshops on the decision-support tools outlined in the Plan can also form part of this ongoing engagement. Continued dialogue will be important as marine planning work continues, and the department will continue to look for opportunities to continue the discussions that were started during its MSP engagement efforts. DFO welcomes anyone to reach out with questions or to express interest in a follow-up session on MSP at any time.

4. CONTACT

To ask questions or provide comments on this report, or marine planning more generally, please feel free to get in touch. Contact us at DFO.OceansMaritimes-OceansMaritimes.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Appendix A – Survey questions and responses

Topic: The first-generation Marine Spatial Plan

1. The areas of focus for the first generation (G1) Marine Spatial Plan include:

- *Building relationships and supporting capacity development*
- *Knowledge products (decision-support tools, data publication and the Atlas)*
- *Emerging activities (offshore wind, aquaculture)*
- *Conservation planning*
- *Engagement*

Should the Plan areas of focus be expanded? If yes, how?

- *Yes: Recognizing that this MSP is intended to be a "first generation" document, we hope that future generations of marine spatial planning will be designed to help decision-makers weigh and prioritize competing claims to marine spaces and make decisions that advance sustainability.*
- *Yes: Integration of coastal management.*
- *Yes: Assessment/evaluation of plan components.*

Should the Plan areas of focus be expanded? If yes, how?

- *Yes: Recognizing that this MSP is intended to be a "first generation" document, we hope that future generations of marine spatial planning will be designed to help decision-makers weigh and prioritize competing claims to marine spaces and make decisions that advance sustainability.*
- *Yes: Integration of coastal management.*
- *Yes: Assessment/evaluation of plan components.*

2. What are your top priorities that you would like to see MSP address?

- *Supporting capacity development.*
- *Decision-support tools that are holistic (include data representative of a wide array of stakeholders/Rightsholders) [and based on] sound data.*
- *Bringing together stakeholders/Rightsholders.*
- *Meaningful relationship building, even if DFO is strictly the facilitator.*
- *Emerging activities and engagement.*
- *Conservation priorities and planning.*
- *Conservation planning.*
- *Engagement and knowledge products.*
- *Sustainability-based decision-making in the management of marine spaces.*
- *The needs and interests of the local communities.*

3. Are there specific geographic areas in need of greater attention?

- *Areas of importance for species at risk (e.g., North Atlantic right whale, Inner Bay of Fundy salmon).*
- *Conservation areas (i.e., MPAs).*
- *Southwest Nova Scotia coastline.*
- *Bay of Fundy.*
- *Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).*

Topic: The Marine Planning Atlas (Atlantic)

4. What were your expectations of the Canada Marine Planning Atlas? [targeted towards respondents who indicated that the Atlas did not function as expected]

- *Better layers, more defined based map with detailed location information*
- *First impression of the atlas was that it was a tool to simply display boundaries. The atlas communicates more information and hosts more ArcGIS functions than initially thought.*

5. What other kind of data would you like to see in the Atlas?

- *Lost fishing gear records.*
- *Nature Trust areas.*
- *Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables bird hotspots with date ranges.*
- *Shipwrecks.*
- *Fishery zones.*
- *More data about species in the region.*
- *Salt marshes, especially in the Bay of Fundy.*
- *Full ecosystem integration.*
- *Cultural dimensions.*
- *Indigenous names.*
- *Climate change-related data (e.g.,: sea surface temperature, [projections] of temperature change over time).*
- *Tourism.*

6. Are there additional functionalities to add?

- *Better view of information boxes associated with data points [to] display the available information.*
- *Find a place using geographic coordinates*

7. What you other information do need/want to use in your decision-making?

- *There needs to be a clear audience for the atlas to dictate the training needed in GIS to use [it]. This will be helpful for organizations to gauge use of atlas and training needs, i.e. in the hiring process for roles related to MSP that will be using the atlas.*
- *Proposed areas of ghost gear retrieval efforts.*
- *Any information that is collected from remotely operated vehicles or remote sensing pertaining to ghost gear.*
- *Non-aquatic marine mammals and birds.*

8. What information do you have that you want others to consider in their decision-making?

- *Knowledge and governance systems of the Off-Reserve aboriginal community in the Maritimes.*
- *Information pertaining to survey-specific work (e.g., microplastics, ghost gear retrievals).*
- *Coastal communities and their names, population and geographic limits.*

Topic: Linkages between MSP and other planning processes

9. Do you have any concerns regarding spatial conflicts or decision-making in the marine environment (e.g., spatial conflicts/activity siting, process, decision-making, etc.)?

- *The assessment of conflicts and the data being used to making these decisions. For example, offshore wind can be compatible with a number of other activities, including aquaculture, artificial coral reef conservation efforts, fish stock conservation, etc. If DFO lists, for example, offshore wind as incompatible with all other ocean activities it will be less likely to receive government support, funding, or investments.*
- *Offshore wind being placed in MPAs.*

- *The minimum standards for marine protected areas under the Oceans Act already prohibit oil and gas exploration, development and production as well as mineral exploration and exploitation. As an ocean industry, offshore wind or other renewables should not be allowed in marine protected areas.*
- *The absence of integrated planning and decision-making processes rooted in law that can advance sustainable conflict management/decision making.*
- *Optimal siting of offshore wind with minimal disruption to other ocean users and species will be informed by this work. If possible some benefits to other ocean users will be excellent.*
- *The discrepancy between what is perceived (by those subjected to spatial plans) about what spatial planning should be and what it is. There is limited emphasis on the importance of reciprocal knowledge-sharing in spatial planning and decision-making.*
- *Not including local stakeholders in MSP.*

10. What might be solutions to the above? How could we be better prepared to manage spatial conflicts?

- *Data.*
- *Collaborations and consultations.*
- *MPAs that prevent wind farms.*
- *Development of accessible and participatory decision-support tools.*
- *Develop a specific strategy for stakeholder engagement based on the local context.*
- *Engaging early and often engagement with identified partners/rightsholders/stakeholders.*
- *Use all available data, and try to avoid hard set answers, allowing flexibility if new data arises.*
- *Properly consult with all stakeholders and Rightsholders prior to any decision-making occurs, and throughout the entire process.*
- *MSP should be the first tool used to address different user or spatial conflicts in the marine environment rather than as a response to a certain industry.*
- *Having [MSP] as the driving force for managing all uses and planning processes would help to better alleviate spatial conflicts especially in relation to conservation and other industries.*
- *Progressive law reform that builds integrated planning and decision-making processes rooted in law.*

11. Given the importance of area-based regulation and management in Canada, what are your views on the use of area-based management tools to prevent/mitigate impacts on habitat, species, and public health and to address pollution prevention, maritime safety and security?

- *Good approach.*
- *Positive, [if] the precautionary approach is also implemented.*
- *Supportive of integrated management rooted in effective laws that are designed to advance sustainability.*
- *Great starting point to address any areas of concern. [Visualization provides] a better understanding of any areas of overlap or high priorities.*
- *Area-based management tools are very important. They provide everyone with the information needed to ensure the ocean space is shared appropriately between all users (including non-human).*
- *Protected areas have proven to be an effective way to conserve habitats and species while providing benefits to communities and people whose livelihoods depend on a healthy ocean.*
- *MSP, as an area-based process, can help regulate marine uses and deal with marine use conflicts. However, it is necessary to identify when MSP is needed; sometimes, fostering MSP can bring more problems than solutions.*

Topic: MSP in the future

12. How would you like to be engaged on MSP?

- *Workshops.*
- *Working groups.*
- *Email lists for updates on offshore wind, MPAs, conservation priorities.*
- *Rightsholders and the Off-Reserve community should be engaged prior and throughout the MSP process (see UNDRIP). This consultation should be ongoing, meaningful, and genuine.*
- *Engagement can range from in-person meetings, workshops, virtual meetings, as long as invitation is shared, and effort is made to include the appropriate representative.*
- *To remain involved in MSP to provide feedback as the G1 plan and future versions of the plan develop.*
- *To remain informed on all further developments to the extent they are being made public, and invited to participate in stakeholder engagement opportunities.*
- *Would like to be aware of how DFO is leading the MSP process in Nova Scotia and to participate in improving the process.*

13. Do you have any general feedback on MSP or the material presented by DFO staff?

- *If MSP is a process and is to be a useful tool for people, there should be dedicated funding allocated to it.*
- *To include more “real life” examples of how MSP will be used in a way the target audience can understand and relate to. The conservation network/offshore wind section wasn't very engaging, and can be rethought to be applicable to the given audience.*
- *MSP, if developed appropriately, can be a valuable asset to planning for conservation and the use of waters in the Maritimes Region. To be the most effective, MSP should be initiated first and have other planning processes feed into it, creating a more holistic approach.*
- *Time should also be dedicated to understanding how MSP would fit into policies or legislation relating to the marine environment given that it does not replace existing authorities but is meant to enhance them. Leaving it as a voluntary tool for people means that it could or could not be used in planning and all the hard work being done would not be as effective.*
- *We would like to better understand how social, economic and ecological components will be weighted in MSP. This could be an area where various community groups and Indigenous Nations can participate in discussions around values.*
- *We would like to better understand how DFO is engaging with Indigenous Nations on MSP as well as what consultations will be had after G1 to ensure all stakeholders are involved.*
- *The materials are great, but hard to understand for people without knowledge of MSP. Communicating MSP is a challenge.*
- *Technical aspects/functions of the Marine Atlas could have been demonstrated more clearly with a click-through of its features.*

14. What topics would you like to focus on during a follow-up session? (if interest indicated).

- *Interactive demonstration.*
- *Stakeholder engagement.*
- *Process communication and pre-planning.*
- *Plans to integrate MSP more formally in law and policy.*
- *Coastal activities and how to work alongside other organizations using MSP.*
- *How MSP can be used in addition to or in conjunction with current legislation and policies.*
- *MSP in practice in the Maritimes and how stakeholders/Rightsholders will be included/impacted by G1 plan.*

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- *What engagement is looking like with Indigenous Nations or stakeholders.*

Appendix B – Participants and organizations contacted

The table below displays the number of individuals or organizations within a certain sector, industry or organization type that were contacted to participate in a marine spatial planning meeting or workshop organized by DFO through the summer and fall of 2023. The table does not represent the number of individuals or organizations that actually participated in MSP engagement. Furthermore, there were a few organizations that were not contacted by DFO and therefore not accounted for in this table, but that did attend a meeting or workshop. Note that other federal departments were engaged with via alternate means, such as existing coordination meetings.

Sector, industry or organization type	Number of organizations or departments contacted
Academia and research	4
Aquaculture industry	2
Economic development	4
Energy industry	4
Environmental non-government organizations	19
Fishing industry	9
Indigenous organizations and First Nations	7
Municipalities and towns of Nova Scotia	47
Provincial government	4
Shipping industry	3
Tourism	1
Total	104

Appendix C – Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the purpose of MSP if it is not legally binding? How will this influence things?**
 - The intention is that people will use the information, tools, and analysis developed under MSP for decision making.
 - The Marine Spatial Plan will not have regulatory powers but it is intended to be used to support improved planning and decision-making.
- **Will MSP be responsive to the expected changes in fishing areas associated with climate change?**
 - DFO will strive to ensure MSP is using the latest datasets and tools to inform decision making.
- **How will insights of other departments be integrated? (e.g., bird data from the Canadian Wildlife Service).**
 - Within the MSP process, there are governance bodies in place with other government departments including Environmental and Climate Change Canada, Transport Canada, Parks Canada and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.
- **What resources are available to guide users in their use of the Atlas?**
 - There is a user guide built into the application (under the question mark icon, top right of the screen). DFO is also planning on developing webinars for the Atlas and other MSP decision-support tools. We are available to meet with your organization to provide an Atlas demo. Please contact us if you are interested.
- **Can place-based knowledge be added to the Atlas?**
 - Yes, as long as it is published.
- **Will the Atlas be useful at both the regional and local scale?**
 - More granular data is something DFO can provide, but privacy concerns must be addressed first. But generally speaking, the Atlas is better for data visualization than spatial analysis. For fine-resolution analyses, the data should be analyzed in GIS software.
- **What happens after the first-generation Marine Spatial Plans are released? How might this translate into more of a spatial plan in the future?**
 - MSP does not have any legislative powers associated with it. The intent is that the first-generation Marine Spatial Plan helps with decision making and enhances collaboration through existing structures. However, part of DFO's role is to support other regulatory activities, and DFO has applied an MSP approach in our work on the Marxan with Zones Analysis for offshore wind and the development of the marine conservation network. These initiatives have tangible outcomes that can support future planning and decision making. Similar spatial analysis may be used for a range of future situations.