FEBRUARY 2025

Photo Credit: Kenchington Lab

WHAT WE HEARD

Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Marine Conservation Network Plan: Public Engagement

Prepared by:
Marine Planning & Conservation Program
Fisheries & Oceans Canada
Maritimes Region

Fisheries and Oceans Canada | Pêches et Océans Canada

Canada

CONTACT INFORMATION
Marine Planning and Conservation
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
1 Challenger Drive, PO Box 1006
Dartmouth, NS
Canada
B2Y 4A2
Email: MaritimesMPAs@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Published by:
Marine Planning and Conservation
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B2Y 4A2

Catalogue number: Fs23-761/2025E-PDF
ISBN 978-0-660-75394-2

Correct citation for this publication:
Fisheries and Oceans Canada. 2025. What We Heard — Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Marine Conservation Network Plan: Public Engagement. 47 p.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 5
1.0 Introduction 6
2.0 Input on the Marine Conservation Network Plan 7
2.1 Overview of Engagement 7
2.2 Methods 8
2.3 Who We Heard From 9
2.4 What We Heard 10
2.4.1 Overall Views on the Network 10
2.4.2 Potential Benefits and Impacts 12
2.4.3 Engagement and Consultation 15
2.4.4 Network Design 16
2.4.5 Network Implementation and Management 17
2.4.6 Climate Change 21
2.4.7 Site-Level Feedback 22
3.0 Next Steps 23
Appendix A: Public Engagement Survey Data 24
Appendix B: Summarized Network Feedback by Site 31
1. Cobequid Bay 31
2. Southern Bight 31
3. Chignecto Bay 31
4. Salmon Rivers 32
5. Bay of Fundy Horse Mussel Aggregations 32
6. West Isles and Passages 32
7. Long Eddy 33
8. South Grand Manan 33
9. Brier Island 34
10. Chebogue 34
11. Eel Bay 34
12. McNutts Island 34
13. Pemsɨk 34
14. LaHave Islands 35

15. Sambro Ledges-Prospect 35
16. Martinique Beach and Musquodoboit Harbour 36
17. St. Mary's (Napu'saqnuk) River and Estuary 36
18. Country Island 36
19. Canso Ledges – Sugar Harbour Islands 36
20. MacNamaras Island 37
21. Fleur-de-Lis Coast 37
22. Bird Islands 37
23. Ingonish 37
24. Aspy Bay 37
25. Bras d'Or Lake 37
26. Southwest Bank 38
27. Western Jordan Basin 38
28. Georges Bank 38
29. LaHave Basin 38
30. Scotian Gulf 39
31. Central Scotian Slope, Rise and Abyss 39
32. Inner Shelf Sea Pen Field 39
33. Logan Canyon 39
34. Sable Island Bank 39
35. Canso Bank and Channels 39
36. Misaine Bank and Laurentian Channel 39
37. Eastern Shoal 40
38. Cold Seeps 40

Appendix C: Public Engagement Survey Questions 41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has been leading the development of a Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy since the mid-2000s. As part of this process, a public engagement period was held from April 29 to June 29, 2024 to gather feedback on the latest version of the Network Plan. This "What We Heard" document provides a summary of the feedback received during this period from a public survey, letters and emails, in addition to meetings held during and around the public engagement period. Using this information, along with other input received from Rightsholders, other levels of government, and ocean users throughout the broader network planning process, DFO aims to release the Network Plan by early 2025. The Network Plan will then guide the selection of future marine conservation areas in this region for years to come, including any sites that will contribute to the national target of protecting 30% of Canada's oceans by 2030. Any site selected for establishment will undergo a separate site-specific consultation and engagement process to determine boundaries and management measures.

During the engagement period, feedback was received through 4 virtual Question & Answer sessions, 24 letters, 230 emails, and from 1092 people who completed an online survey. In addition, 40 meetings were held during and around the public engagement period with First Nations and Indigenous organizations, provincial and municipal governments, industry groups including fishing and aquaculture, and environmental non-governmental organizations.

Overall, there appears to be a high level of support for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Marine Conservation Network Plan from those who responded to the survey. 83% of survey respondents indicated that they either somewhat or strongly supported the Network Plan, while 15% somewhat or strongly opposed. Supportive respondents expressed their desire for new conservation areas to help halt and reverse biodiversity loss, minimize the impacts of climate change, maintain the connection that people have to nature, and limit unsustainable activities. Those opposed highlighted concerns with the impacts of restricting economic activities, particularly on fish harvesters and coastal communities; the ability for effective management and monitoring of new conservation areas; and the need for new conservation areas, suggesting that existing sites and current regulations on ocean activities are sufficient to protect the environment.

Respondents also provided input regarding their values related to the marine environment, concerns around climate change, and potential benefits and impacts from Network Plan implementation. Feedback was also received on the network design, the engagement and consultation process, site implementation and management, and individual network sites.

1.0 Introduction

Canada has committed to protecting at least 30% of our oceans by 2030 through the creation of an ecologically representative network of marine conservation areas. This network will help protect marine biodiversity and secure the long-term health and resilience of our oceans, which provide many benefits to ocean industries, coastal communities and the Canadian public. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is leading the development of the national network of marine conservation areas on behalf of the Government of Canada, while working closely with Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Since the mid-2000s, many steps have been taken to develop a Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy including gathering available ecological and human use information, developing science advice, setting conservation objectives and priorities, designing the conservation network, and consulting at every step of the process.[1]

The Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Region (herein the "Network Plan" or "Network") is a long-term strategy for spatial marine conservation, which will guide the selection of future spatial conservation areas for years to come. It was developed using best practices in systematic conservation planning, incorporating ecological and human use data, spatial analyses, and feedback collected through consultation and engagement. The Network Plan includes existing marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), current Areas of Interest, which are sites that are being assessed as potential *Oceans Act* MPAs, and a collection of other sites that have been identified as important for future conservation (see Figure 1). Any sites selected from the Network Plan will require their own in-depth analysis and consultation and engagement processes to determine site boundaries, management measures, and regulations.

[1] Visit our website to learn more about the approach for creating the Network Plan and to explore our interactive map of network sites: https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/networks-reseaux/scotian-shelf-plateau-neo-ecossais-bay-baie-fundy/development-developpement-eng.html

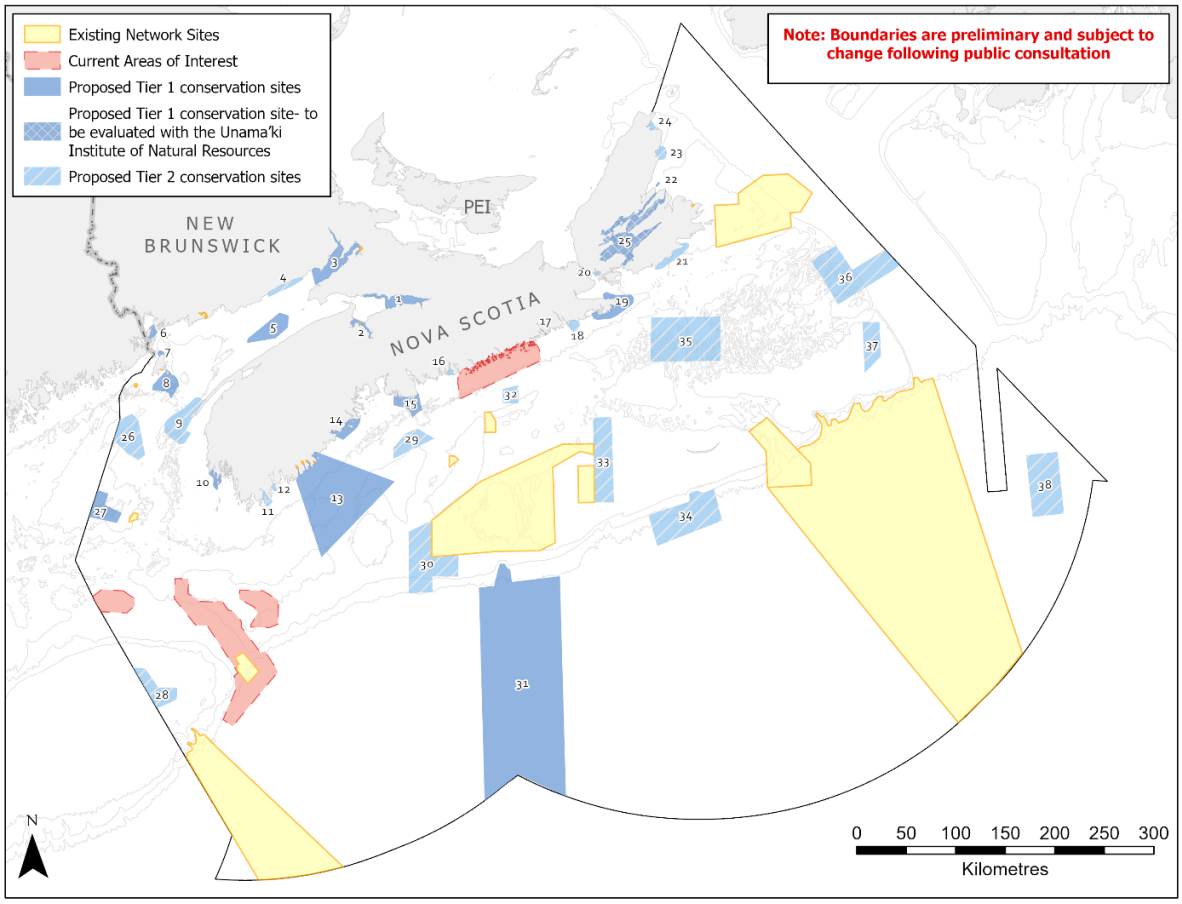

Figure 1: Draft Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Marine Conservation Network Plan as of April 2024. Site numbers match Network Plan sites described in Appendix B.

2.0 Input on the Marine Conservation Network Plan

2.1 Overview of Engagement

The conservation network planning process for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy has spanned nearly two decades. During this time, the focus has shifted from data collection and developing science advice to technical spatial analysis and eventually to more formal engagement and consultation on earlier versions of the Network Plan (see Figure 2).

A round of targeted engagement and consultation on the first draft of the Network Plan occurred from July 2021 to March 2022 with other levels of government, Rightsholders, and stakeholders.[2] After updating the Network Plan based on feedback received, a public engagement was conducted from April 29th to June 29th, 2024. The primary intention of this

[2] The What We Heard report for the targeted engagement is available upon request via MaritimesMPAs@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

public engagement period was to gather feedback from those who may not have had previous opportunity to provide feedback or additional information into the Network Planning process (e.g., through targeted engagement and consultation, stakeholder meetings, etc.). It is important to note that throughout this process, DFO has ongoing conversations with Rightsholders, other levels of government, and ocean users to inform the Network Plan. **This What We Heard document summarizes feedback received during the public engagement period but does not provide specific responses to those comments**. A summary of the full network engagement process and what changes have been made to the network based on this feedback will be provided in the Network Plan, which will be released in 2025.

Figure 2: Timeline of the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Marine Conservation Network Plan.

2.2 Methods

This What We Heard document reflects feedback provided through the public engagement survey, virtual Question & Answer sessions, emails and letters received during the public engagement period, as well as feedback gathered during meetings held during and around the public engagement period. The document is a summary of main themes from the feedback received. It does not list every comment received through this process; however, all feedback received is being considered as DFO works to revise the Network Plan.

A public survey available to all Canadians was created to gather site-specific and network-level feedback. It was also meant to gauge the respondent's level of support for marine conservation and their values associated with the marine environment. The public engagement survey was developed with input from Parks Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, and was discussed with the Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia[3] (see Appendix C for survey questions). The survey was posted to the Consulting with Canadians website from April 29 to June 29, 2024. Participants self-selected to fill out the survey and submissions were anonymous. Only surveys that were

[3] While the Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia provided feedback on survey questions, this does not constitute an endorsement of the Network Plan, public engagement process or the survey results.

fully completed and submitted were included in the analysis and presented in this document.[4]

Survey results were initially viewed in Microsoft Excel to remove surveys that were not submitted, and process data from closed-ended questions. Qualitative data from open-ended questions was coded in NVIVO 14 software using a thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006)[5] to identify themes, which were then summarized for this report.

The public was also able to send emails and letters to the Marine Planning and Conservation Team via mail or email (MaritimesMPAs@dfo-mpo.gc.ca). Upon request, DFO held meetings with Rightsholders, other levels of government and other organizations during and around the public engagement period. Letters, emails and meeting minutes were reviewed, and general themes of feedback are summarized in this report.

Throughout this document, we have included a sample of direct quotes from respondents, including from emails, letters and open-ended survey questions (see Appendix C, questions 7 and 14).

2.3 Who We Heard From

During the engagement period from April 29 to June 29, 2024, feedback was received through:

- 1092 completed online surveys,
- 230 emails,
- 34 letters (via email or physical mail), and
- 4 virtual Question & Answer sessions.

In addition, 40 meetings were held during and around the public engagement period, including:

- 10 with First Nations & Indigenous organizations
- 9 with Fishing Industry including fleet and species-wide Advisory Committees

[4] A minimum target sample size was calculated to ensure a statistically relevant portion of the population in each province was surveyed. Based on population size, the target sample size for each province was calculated to be 385 people with a 95% confidence interval (the confidence that the sample accurately reflects the attitudes of the population) and a 5% margin of error (the population's responses may deviate from the sample by plus or minus 5%) based on a sample size calculator found at - https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/. While the aim was to sample a statistically relevant portion of the population, the survey may not be representative of all groups and communities as people self-selected to complete the survey.

[5] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

- 9 with Provincial Governments
- 6 with Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs)
- 2 with Aquaculture Industry
- 2 with Municipal Governments
- 1 with Other Marine Industry
- 1 with Multi-sector Working Group

Of the 1092 completed survey responses, 530 came from Nova Scotia, 471 from New Brunswick, 85 from other parts of Canada, and 6 from outside Canada. For a full breakdown by county, please see Figure A, Appendix A. Gender and age breakdowns of survey respondents can also be found in Figures B and C, Appendix A.

What are the top three things that survey respondents valued most about the ocean?

1. Marine animals and plant life
2. Physical and mental health benefits
3. Economic opportunities from ocean related jobs

(for complete list, see Figure G, Appendix A)

Many survey respondents shared that their households depend on the ocean to some extent for recreation (91%), sustenance (61%), cultural reasons (53%) and income (43%) (see Figure D, Appendix A). In addition, respondents shared that they engage in activities in the Atlantic Ocean or along the coast daily (26%), weekly (26%) or seasonally (25%), while the remainder shared that they engage in ocean activities monthly (13%) or annually (6%) (see Figure E, Appendix A).

Survey respondents were asked about their primary interests in the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy and were able to choose up to three interests. 67% indicated they were interested in conservation, followed by recreation (36%), scientific research (21%), commercial fishing (19%), and tourism (14%). For the complete list, see Figure F, Appendix A.

2.4 What We Heard

2.4.1 Overall Views on the Network

Overall, there appears to be a high level of support for the Network Plan from those that responded to the survey. When asked to what extent they supported creating new marine conservation areas as proposed in the Network Plan, 83% said they either somewhat or strongly supported the Network, while 15% somewhat or strongly opposed (see Figure 3). When broken down by province, 92% of respondents from New Brunswick supported the Network, while 6% opposed it and 72% of respondents from Nova Scotia supported the Network, while 26% opposed it.

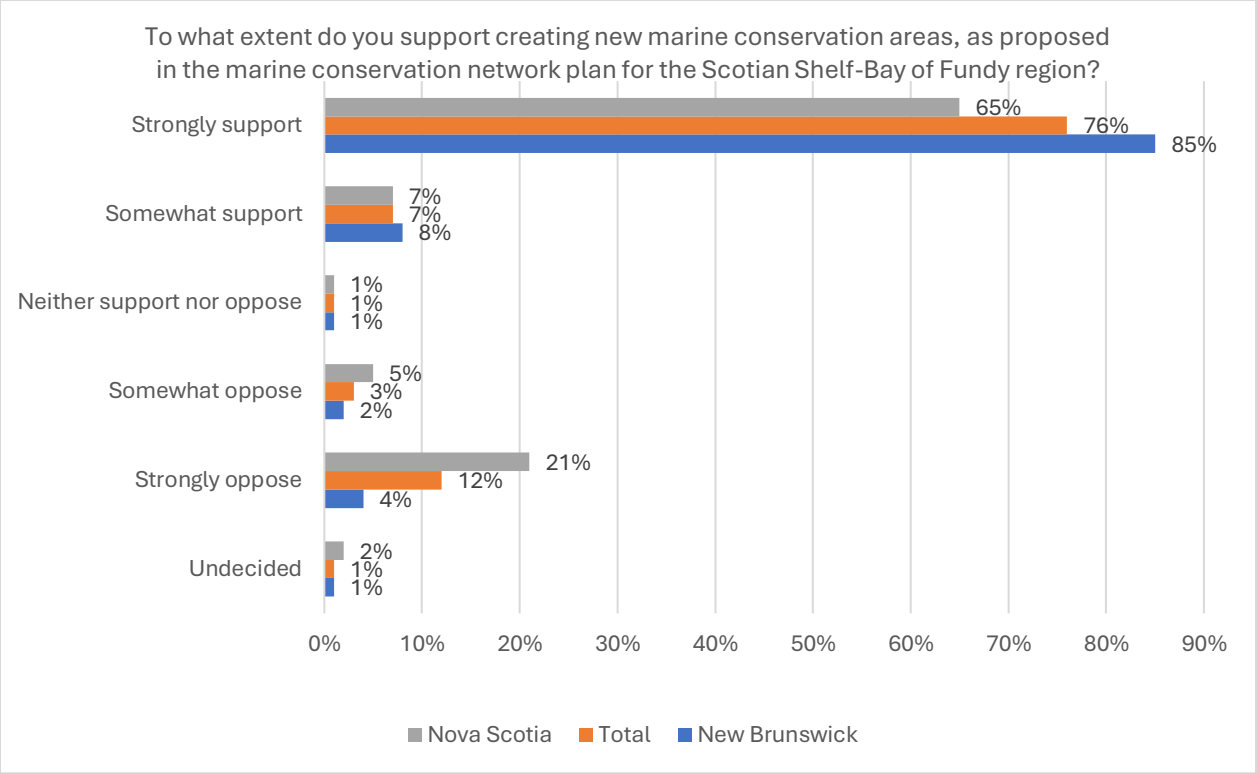

Figure 3: Survey responses to the question "To what extent do you support creating new marine conservation areas, as proposed in the marine conservation network plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region?" The Total bar represents the total number of respondents (N) to the survey (N=1092), while the Nova Scotia (N=530) and New Brunswick (N=471) bars just include respondents from those provinces.

"Despite the fact that my husband's business is dependent on the oceans and I have worked in the fishing industry. I have tremendous respect for our oceans and the people that earn a living from it and work to manage it. Above all, I want our children to have future that is hopeful and sustainable on healthy planet."

"Conservation areas are important to protect the aquatic plants and animals of the region as well as preserving opportunities for research, education, recreation and traditional practices."

"Fishers are wonderful stewards for the ocean, most of us protect it because we make our income from it. I don't feel we need our government's interfering and "protecting " anything."

Through the engagement process, we heard views that supported and views that opposed the Network Plan (see Table 1 for a high-level summary of qualitative analysis of survey responses, in addition to feedback received from emails, letters and meetings). We also heard from those who emphasized that balance was warranted to ensure environmental protection while still allowing for activities that support coastal communities and livelihoods that rely on these marine ecosystems.

Table 1: High level summary of feedback received through emails, letters, meeting summaries and responses to the survey question "Why do you or do you not support creating new conservation areas, as proposed in the marine conservation network plan?".

Why Support?	Why Oppose?
• Need to create conservation areas to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and let nature heal from human caused impacts. • Need to protect ecosystems and the services they provide for current and future generations, and to contribute to sustainability. • Urgency to respond to the climate crisis. • Maintain the connection that people have to nature, including between ocean health and human health and wellbeing. • Feel that protecting the environment is right thing to do. • Limit practices such as bottom trawling, oil and gas and mining activities.	• Belief that existing conservation areas and current regulations are enough to protect the environment and manage fisheries. • Unclear what management measures of new conservation areas would be and what impacts they could have on various activities. • Worry about economic and social impacts if fishing is limited, including potential hardships to fish harvesters, their families and the coastal communities they support. • Concern around the management and monitoring of conservation areas to ensure they are being effective. • Concern there won't be adequate enforcement to ensure rules are being followed.

"I fully support creating new conservation areas in the Bay of Fundy and the Scotian Shelf. Research has shown that marine protection is one the ways to tackle biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. Conservation helps to support economies, the health and wellbeing of people and ensure Indigenous People can continue their culture and traditions. By creating new conservation areas, the Bay of Fundy and Scotian shelf can remain and important part of the fabric of Atlantic Canada and continue to provide the benefits people currently enjoy when interacting with the ocean."

"We already have sufficient regulation to protect our oceans. MPAs offer redundancy. More over, they threaten our communities and economies."

2.4.2 Potential Benefits and Impacts

The survey showed that respondents expect that implementing the Network Plan will have ecological effects (see Figure I, Appendix A):

- Many believe that the number and variety of marine species inside (77%) and outside (63%) of marine conservation areas will increase.
- 82% believe that the quality of habitats for marine species will improve.
- 79% believe that fish populations in conservation areas will increase.

The survey also showed that respondents anticipate there being social and economic effects if the Network Plan is implemented (see Figure J, Appendix A):

- Over half feel the overall economy will improve (55%) and the total number of jobs will increase (56%), while 31% feel there will be little or no impact on the overall economy and total number of jobs.
- Many feel there will be more local jobs related to science and conservation (88%) and tourism (63%).
- While 44% feel there will be more local jobs related to fishing, 41% believe there will be very little or no impact.
- 79% think our understanding of the ocean will improve.
- 78% think a healthy ocean for the future will be provided.
- 67% see there being new opportunities for tourism and recreation.

"Humans depend on the oceans for our own living and wellbeing. The oceans must remain healthy, not only for the plants and animals that live in, on, and around the oceans, but for our own wellbeing too."

When survey respondents were asked how they thought the Network Plan would affect them if implemented (see Figure K, Appendix A):

- 77% believe their connection to nature will be positively impacted, while 6% believe it will be negatively impacted.
- 73% believe their community well-being will be positively impacted, while 13% believe it will be negatively impacted.
- 74% believe their mental health will be positively impacted, while 11% believe it will be negatively impacted.
- 63% feel their physical health will be positively impacted, while 9% believe it will be negatively impacted.
- 63% believe their activities and practices related to the ocean will be positively impacted while 13% believe it will be negatively impacted.
- 56% believe their access to marine areas and resources will be positively impacted while 15% thought it would be negatively impacted.

"Because our economy, culture and well-being is closely linked to healthy oceans."

"This area is economically reliant on multiple fisheries, along with the local economic spinoffs, a significant part of the provincial economy relies on the fisheries."

- 54% feel that their traditional knowledge and cultural identify will be positively impacted, while others believed their traditional knowledge (8%) and cultural identify (9%) would be negatively impacted.
- 45% believe their access to food will be positively impacted, while 13% believe it will be negatively impacted.
- 44% believe that employment security and economic well-being will improve while 16% felt it would be impacted negatively.

"The sites being selected comprise a great deal of the existing fishing grounds for this fishery and if consideration of cumulative impacts are not considered in the development of each of the sites affecting this component, the fishery could effectively be closed inadvertently or cause unintended consequences, such as using gear types that are more impactful on the stock and marine environment."

Feedback received from emails, letters, meetings and survey responses also reveal respondent's views on the potential positive and negative impacts of the Network Plan (see Table 2).

Table 2: Respondent's views of the potential benefits and impacts of marine conservation, as summarized from feedback received in emails, letters, meeting summaries and responses to the survey question "Why do you or do you not support creating new conservation areas, as proposed in the marine conservation network plan?"

Potential Positive Impacts	Potential Negative Impacts
• Protect biodiversity and important habitats, including nursery areas that support fish stock recovery. • Protect ecosystems and ecosystem services for future generations. • Enhance the climate change resilience of marine ecosystems. • Help maximize benefits to commercial and Rights-based fishing activities. • Support food security. • Preserve culture, support community well-being, and aid in economic development. • Enhance opportunities for recreation, tourism, research and education. • Prevent overharvesting, and minimize unsustainable fishing practices. • Prohibit industrial activities such as mining and offshore oil and gas. • Enhance understanding of potential pressures (e.g., finfish aquaculture, pollution, marine renewable energy, shipping, coastal development).	• Limiting fisheries could cause hardships for fish harvesters and their families. • Negative economic and social impacts on coastal communities should jobs and livelihoods be negatively impacted. • Limiting economic development. • Blanket application of minimum standards could significantly impact mobile bottom fisheries, even in areas where the activity may not pose risk to the conservation objectives. • Displacement of fishing efforts or other industrial activities could put more focused pressure on areas outside of the Network Plan sites. • Cumulative impacts to ocean users, from competition for ocean space with other industry sectors or limitations imposed by other policies and regulations. • Lack of access to areas for food harvesting. • Concerns around potential regulations and management of new sites.

"If done in an equitable, fair, collaborative way, marine protected areas have the potential to provide many ecological, social, and economic benefits. They are a tool to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts and they can empower local communities and support reconciliation."

"They are not needed and will only negatively affect the people that use these areas for food and economic uses"

"I believe conservation of plant and animal species and habitat is important. I also recognize that many Nova Scotians have made their living on the sea for generations, and hope they will be able to continue to do so in a responsible way."

2.4.3 Engagement and Consultation

When asked how they heard about the public engagement process, survey respondents noted that they heard about it from social media (32%), friends or family (21%), colleagues (18%) or the news (18%). For the complete list see Figure L, Appendix A.

"More publicity about the proposed plan so people can participate and provide feedback. This is so important to our communities. We have to get this right!"

Feedback gathered from emails, letters, meetings and qualitative survey analysis showed that while some were pleased with the engagement process, others suggested that there should have been more opportunities for engagement. Concerns were raised about the methods selected for this public engagement period, in particular the lack of advertisement and fully online nature of the engagement. Some respondents thought that this may have presented barriers to participation, and therefore not all interested parties may have had the opportunity to provide feedback. As a result, some respondents feel the feedback may not be representative of all perspectives and communities, raising concerns about DFO using information collected during this process.

It was suggested that holding community open houses and having better communication about the public engagement would have enhanced the feedback received and should be considered for future engagement processes. It was also suggested that information on how to participate in site-specific establishment moving forward should be communicated.

"We have concerns about the current round of outreach being purely digital. We question the overall accessibility of the network plan as all aspects of the engagement file including the map, survey, and webinar require a reliable internet connection. This can be a significant challenge in more rural areas and is a barrier to participating in public engagement. in partnership with local communities who have a strong relationship and understanding of the proposed areas and Indigenous parties."

Feedback was received that DFO needs clear, transparent, continued, and meaningful engagement with Rightsholders, ocean users, other levels of government and coastal communities throughout site implementation. Some respondents advocated for increased engagement, in particular with seafood harvesting, seafood processing and aquaculture sectors, in addition to having multi-sector meetings. It was also suggested that DFO needs to work more closely with Rightsholders through Nation-to-Nation consultations to discuss co-management and co-governance opportunities.

2.4.4 Network Design

This section focuses on feedback related to the design of the Network Plan and identification of proposed sites. Any feedback related to creation or management of new conservation areas are presented in the next section.

"We need more marine conservation, and quickly, if we are going to prevent the collapse of species and habitats. I hope this is just the beginning of a more ambitious plan."

Survey respondents were asked which three elements of the Network Plan were most important to them. The top responses included (for the full list, see Figure H, Appendix A):

- Protection for a diversity of marine species (69%)
- Protection for resources and habitats (57%)
- Sustainable use of ocean resources (42%)
- Resilience to climate change (34%)
- Improved scientific knowledge (32%).

A number of survey respondents, in addition to those attending meetings or sending emails or letters, requested more information about the network design, in particular how proposed network sites were identified, if any ecological "trade-offs" were made to avoid important areas for industrial activities, and how sites will be prioritized for protection. In general, we heard that network sites need to have clear conservation objectives based on strong science showing why these features are important and how spatial protection will conserve these features. It was noted that current conservation objectives are too broad making it unclear how network sites will achieve their ecological objectives. It was also noted that it was not clear how the network provides greater conservation value than individual sites.

"It is important that this is a network that is being developed with clear purposes and objectives to allow stakeholders to provide meaningful input. We urge DFO to consider stronger parameters and clearer direction in what the network is meant to achieve and how it will do so."

A whole-of-ecosystem approach was also suggested to conserve the full range of habitat types in the region. In particular, it was suggested that we should prioritize protecting areas of high biodiversity and

sensitive, habitat-forming species, such as deep-sea corals and sponges. Connectivity, such as protecting migration corridors, was noted as an important element for effective conservation.

"Include the coast and shorelines in the protected areas. Development is encroaching on the shore causing changes to important habitat."

Considering the connection between land and sea was also highlighted, which would require collaboration between different levels of government. The small size of some network sites was raised as a concern, particularly around how effective and connected these areas could be, and the ability for enforcement.

Some feedback also noted that protecting areas of high conservation value, such as sites that are important to many species or areas with sensitive habitats, should not be compromised to accommodate commercial interests. We heard wide ranging feedback on the size of the network — from implementing no new conservation areas to protecting 80% of the region. The majority of those who mentioned percent targets suggested that the network should cover 30% of the region.

"There is always a balancing act, but in general bigger and more connected is better."

2.4.5 Network Implementation and Management

Survey respondents were asked if they had any concerns about the Network Plan (for full list, see Figure M, Appendix A). While 17% indicated they had no concerns about the plan, others noted the following concerns:

- Lack of adequate resources for monitoring and enforcement (55%)
- Lack of adequate protection for species and habitats (36%)
- Critical spaces that are not included as conservation areas (34%)
- Lack of understanding of the process for proposed sites (19%)
- Limits to economic opportunity (16%)

Feedback received from surveys, emails, letters and in meetings included a number of suggestions to improve implementing the Network Plan and the management and monitoring of new conservation areas. Additional information on the proposed legislative tool(s), potential management measures, and allowable activities for each site was also requested.

"The health and sustainability of Nova Scotia's fisheries is directly linked to the success of a given fishery and is therefore, most often, at the forefront of a fisher's concerns. No one wants their fishery to collapse. It is therefore imperative for DFO to seek good relations with fishing communities and work together with them to establish protected areas."

2.4.5.1 Network Implementation Timelines

There were a number of suggestions about how to improve site implementation and management, including a desire for the plan to move forward quickly - as some respondents felt the current process to designate sites is too slow. Several letters suggested implementing interim protection, with one organization further recommending that sites be established in batches to help accelerate network site implementation. It was also suggested that a clear deadline be set for full network implementation, including timelines for Tier 2 sites.

2.4.5.2 Science and Knowledge

Respondents suggested that the best available science, together with Indigenous knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge and citizen science be used to inform the planning and management of conservation areas and address current knowledge gaps. In addition, a pathway on how new information would be incorporated to inform future changes to the Network Plan must be developed and transparently communicated.

> *"At a certain point we must follow the science and change behaviours to provide a better future."*

2.4.5.3 Indigenous-led Conservation

We heard that the Network Plan should incorporate First Nations' interests, language and priorities. Further, Indigenous Rights, traditional knowledge and community values, such as Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing), need to be upheld and incorporated into the Network Plan.

Feedback was also received about the need to work with Indigenous communities on the creation and management of conservation areas to support Indigenous Rights and advance reconciliation efforts. In particular, it was noted that opportunities for Indigenous-led conservation, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area establishment, should be provided and supported. In addition, discussions on Indigenous management and co-management network sites should occur.

> *"The marine conservation network plan must work in conjunction with the commercial, local and indigenous fishermen/women of the areas. Dialogue with the elders and experienced fishing industry personnel must take place. Shutting down potential harvests in these protected areas must not happen because the government cannot figure it out. Planning and discussion is mandatory to create an harmonious and positively functioning conservation area. Maintaining beauty of our coast and ocean as well as protecting cultural indigenous traditions while implementing sustainable food harvests from our oceans can be done if planning, cooperation and resources are allocated in this plan."*

It was recommended that Indigenous-led conservation be a priority at every step in the Network Plan. It was noted that meaningful Nation-to-Nation negotiations, and a genuine collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments is required for the success of any conservation plan in the region.

"To protect the ocean and the life within it. While I support creating new conservation areas, I strongly believe that it must be done in equitable partnership with Indigenous Communities."

2.4.5.4 Consideration of economic, social and cultural factors

A need to carefully consider all potential social, cultural and economic benefits and negative impacts to people and communities before moving forward was conveyed. It was suggested that rigorous socioeconomic and cost/benefit analyses be conducted, and current approaches improved to systematically incorporate social, cultural and economic information and consider impacts to coastal communities. It was also suggested that this information be clearly presented so all parties can fully understand potential benefits and negative impacts. Additionally, it was suggested that any potential benefits of conservation areas, including to fisheries and economic development, should be more clearly communicated.

"Take them away because there is no accurate data out there to prove that this will change climate change. What is known is that this will have a huge economical impact on fishers and the communities in which they live at a time when economy security is up in the air right now."

We also heard about the need to highlight the importance of the long history of fishing in the region, as well as recognizing and maintaining cultural heritage and connections linked to the ocean. It was noted that the network needs to actively minimize negative economic impacts on marine industries, particularly for fisheries that rely on species that cannot be caught elsewhere (e.g., scallops, clams). It was also suggested that working with coastal communities to understand and minimize any negative impacts and maximize benefits would be beneficial.

"MPAs is the current way that we can make manage protection and should be done in partnership with local communities who have a strong relationship and understanding of the proposed areas and Indigenous parties."

There was a range of feedback on prioritizing nature versus economic concerns, with some wanting nature prioritized, others suggesting that conservation be balanced with economic needs, and others suggesting that conservation should not move forward – or that other ways of protecting important habitats and species be considered - because of potential impacts to fisheries and the economy. Marine Spatial Planning was also highlighted as a good process for implementing a conservation network that is balanced with economic development.

2.4.5.5 Allowable Activities

There was a high amount of variation in the activities that respondents felt should or should not be allowed in protected areas. In general, we heard that low-impact activities should continue if they do not pose high risk to conservation objectives. In particular, tourism, recreation and lobster fishing were noted in this regard. However, some concern was raised about allowing "low-impact activities" to continue within sites. These respondents noted that all activities need to be evaluated during site designation to ensure they do not pose undue risk to conservation priorities.

Several respondents noted that high protection zones, where no commercial activities are permitted, should be included in network sites because this is considered best practice for protected areas. Some suggested that high protection zones should cover at least 30% of each site. Alternatively, others stated that high protection zones would have major negative impact on ocean industries and that the need for these zones should be closely examined. It was suggested that the Federal protection standard[6] should be applied across all sites, including other effective area-based conservation measures, prohibiting bottom trawl fisheries, mining, offshore oil and gas activities and dumping.

> *"Fisheries should never be excluded or limited in an MPA. If the fishery is managed sustainably, it is already protected. Moreover, fishermen are, have been, will always be the stewards of our oceans."*

In order to improve the process moving forward, numerous respondents wanted assurance that new conservation areas would support traditional livelihoods, including fishing, and that sustainable harvest would continue. It was requested that guarantees be provided that network sites would not impact the lobster fishery. It was also noted that Rights-based fisheries and small-scale fisheries should continue within network sites, while it was often noted that large-scale commercial activities should be prohibited.

> *"Allow recreation, personal fishing, hunting and access to all these zones. focus on the real threats… industry, commercial activity, invasive and climate change. Let residents continue to enjoy these areas which cause so little impact."*

While many respondents felt that renewable energy development and aquaculture were not compatible with conservation, others thought these activities could be permitted. A need to consider new and developing industries and their potential impacts on the marine environment, and to create standards for treatment of these activities in conservation areas, was also noted. It was suggested that more attention be given to managing pollution, including marine debris, reducing bycatch of marine animals in marine debris,

[6] To learn more, visit: https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/mpa-zpm/protection-standard-norme-protection-eng.html

and light pollution reduction and mitigation. It was also suggested that more consideration be given to the impacts coastal and shoreline development can have on proposed adjacent coastal protected areas.

> *"Any changes to fishing areas, laws, need a great deal of consideration. As a carpenter my livelihood has depended on the ocean, when fishing is good work follows, take away any jobs and my work is gone. Wishing that Government would look deeply into how their decisions can affect whole communities, along with conservation. The welfare of small communities needs to be seen. There will be no tourism or recreation if these places are gone."*

> *"Our entire family and extended family rely on lobster fishing and ground-fishing. Closing the areas to all types of fishing would be catastrophic to our way of life and income. We would lose everything we have worked for our whole lives due to our significant financial investment (i.e. boats, licenses, gears, homes mortgaged to finance fishing etc.) to be fishermen."*

2.4.5.6 Management, Monitoring and Enforcement

There were suggestions highlighting the need to work together to design, manage and monitor protected areas, including with Indigenous and coastal communities, and municipal and provincial governments. It was also suggested that opportunities for co-management with First Nations and community-led conservation efforts should be explored.

It was suggested that DFO needs to develop clear strategies on how they will monitor and enforce marine conservation areas with other regulators and ensure they have adequate resources to implement these strategies to verify that sites are meeting their goals. Others suggestions include ensuring activity restrictions and enforcement be equitable across different groups and industries, that there be increased enforcement of current rules and regulations, and that Indigenous and coastal communities be involved in monitoring and enforcement activities.

> *"I would wonder who will enforce the proposed protection strategies for the proposed new areas."*

2.4.6 Climate Change

Survey respondents were asked if they had heard about or witnessed any climate change-related impacts in the ocean and coastal areas. They indicated they had seen or heard about coastal damage (81%), stronger and more frequent storms (78%), warmer waters (71%), changing habitats (68%), invasive species (67%), and higher sea levels (64%) (see Figure N, Appendix A). In addition, 25% of respondents had also seen measures put in place to adapt the coastline to climate change, such as the building of seawalls and seagrass or wetland restoration.

"Creating interconnected protected areas is essential for mitigating the worst climate effects on our coasts and communities, ensuring food security and a thriving fishery, maintaining our way of life as coastal communities and ensuring that we are passing on a world to future generations that is livable."

Qualitative survey analysis noted respondents' concerns about the impacts of climate change from warmer ocean temperatures and rising sea levels to coastal destruction due to stronger storms. Respondents noted the urgency to respond to the climate crisis, and felt that conservation areas can help mitigate, or minimize, the impacts of climate change by lessening other human pressures on sensitive ecosystems.

When asked about what ecological effects they expect to occur if the Network Plan is implemented, 50% of respondents indicated that they expect the impacts of climate change to be minimized, while 41% believe that implementing new conservation areas will have very little or no impact on minimizing the impacts of climate change (see Figure I, Appendix A). When asked what could be improved with the Network Plan, survey respondents suggested that creating new conservation areas should be created quickly to improve the resilience of coastal habitats and communities in order to minimize the impacts of climate change. Some respondents also noted that the Network Plan must be able to be adapted in light of climate change impacts or availability of new information.

"Climate change is a threat to marine life and ocean activity everywhere. As a coastal province, I think we have an especially important stake in safeguarding existing ecosystems and integrating sustainable human-ocean activities."

2.4.7 Site-Level Feedback

Site-specific feedback was collected from open-ended survey questions, emails and letters. In particular, the public engagement survey offered an opportunity to provide feedback on specific sites in the Network Plan (see Appendix C, Question 15). Feedback included information on: the accuracy of site descriptions, potential benefits or negative impacts if the site was implemented, and how the site could be improved.

175 people responded to the site-specific survey questions. Generally, coastal sites received more feedback than offshore sites. While all sites received some level of feedback, only 30 of 38 sites received meaningful survey responses (e.g., contained site-specific feedback), though additional site-level feedback was received through emails, letters, and meetings and included in site summaries (see Appendix B for summarized network feedback by site). Site-level feedback will be used to support revisions to the Network Plan, such as updating site profiles and making modifications to boundaries at the site level.

Some respondents also provided feedback on other sites not part of the current engagement process. Although these sites are important parts of the conservation network, they already have their own ongoing consultation processes (e.g. Fundian Channel-Browns Bank Area of Interest and Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest). This feedback has been provided to the DFO staff leading those consultations and has not been included here. A number of respondents provided general feedback on the need for increased conservation in the Bay of Fundy, in addition to proposing specific sites including: Dipper Harbour, Isle Haute, Mispec, Maces Bay, Machias Seal Island, The Wolves, coastal sites and areas within Passamaquoddy Bay and the West Isles (e.g., Sam Orr's Pond, St. Croix Estuary and Tongue Shoal), and Little Musquash Cove. Mahone Bay, off Nova Scotia, and the waters surrounding St. Paul's Island, north of Cape Breton, were also proposed.

3.0 Next Steps

The Network Plan will be released in early 2025 and will be available on DFO's website.[7] This planning document will guide the selection of future conservation areas.

> *"In efforts to meet commitments to protect 30% of Canada's waters by 2030, the network plan is an important milestone in conserving representative and significant marine areas in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick."*

Once sites are officially selected from the Network Plan to start moving towards implementation and legal designation (e.g., regulations or changes to activities on the water), extensive engagement, consultation and further analysis will occur. For example, the process for *Oceans Act* MPA establishment takes approximately 5 years, during which there will be opportunities for Rightsholders, other levels of government, ocean users, and other stakeholders to discuss and contribute to any changes to site boundaries, management, and supporting regulations.

Information gathered during the public engagement period, including survey results, will be used to support site selection and engagement during site establishment. Survey results will also continue to be used in a variety of ways, including to help inform communications products and support education, outreach and engagement.

> *"The oceans are quite literally our lifeline. Biodiversity needs to be sustained and restored to maintain the oceans ability to provide resources into perpetuity. A network allows for the protection and restoration of key habitats and species while also accounting for climate driven changes that would cause shifts in species distribution and movement patterns."*

[7] Please visit our website, which will be updated with the Network Plan in early 2025: https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/networks-reseaux/scotian-shelf-plateau-neo-ecossais-bay-baie-fundy/sites-eng.html

Appendix A: Public Engagement Survey Data

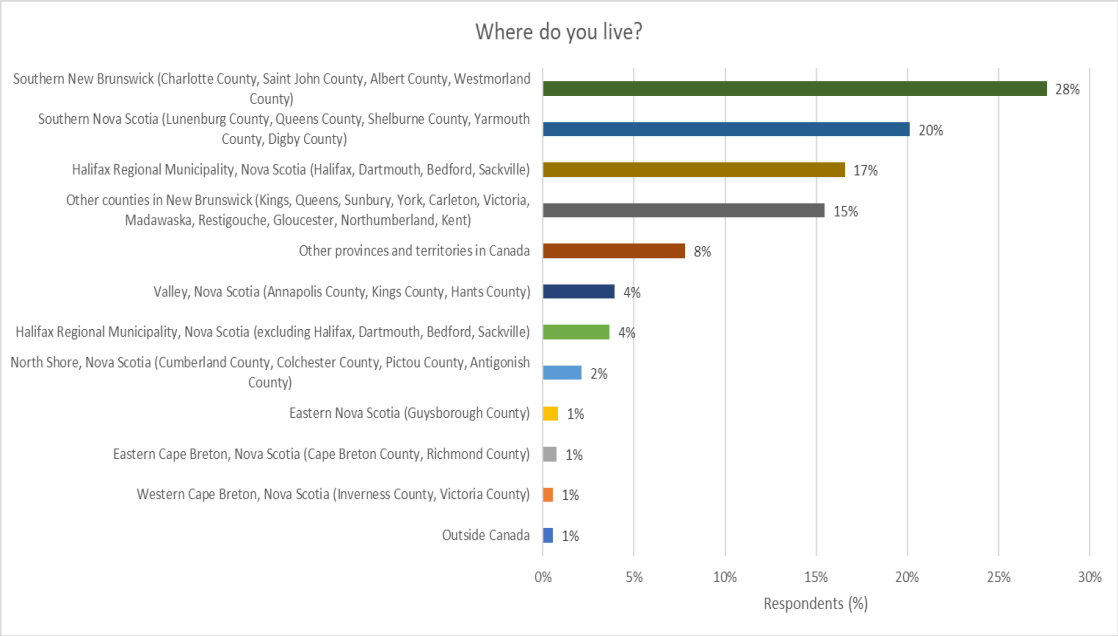

Figure A: Survey responses to the question "Where do you live?" N=1092.

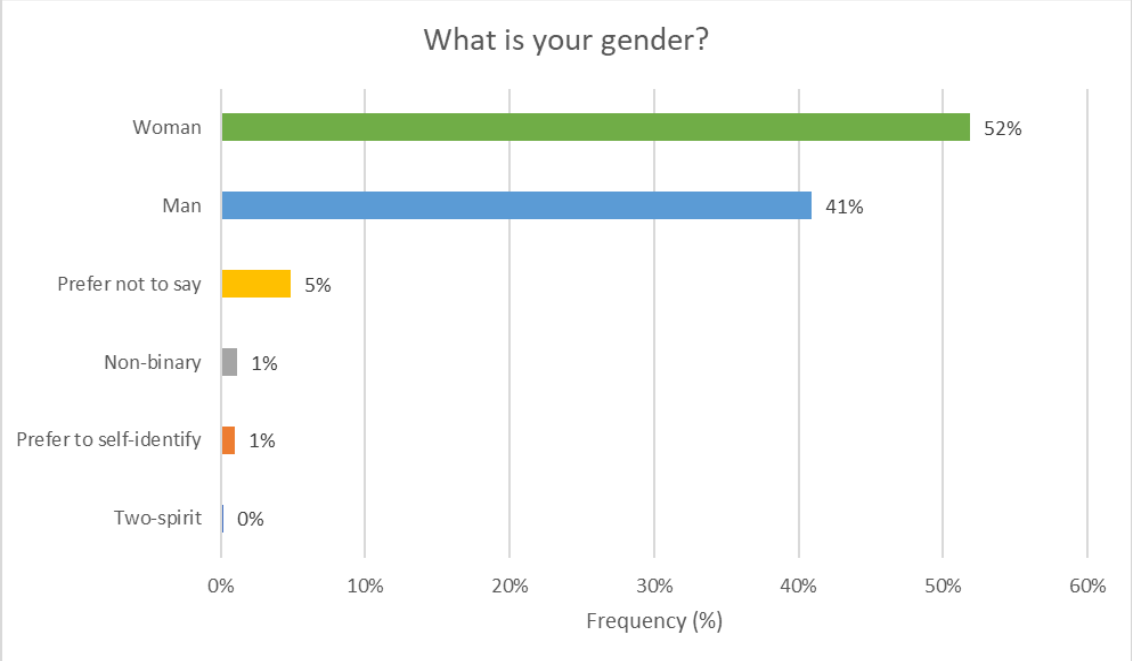

Figure B: Survey responses to the question "What is your gender?" N=1092.

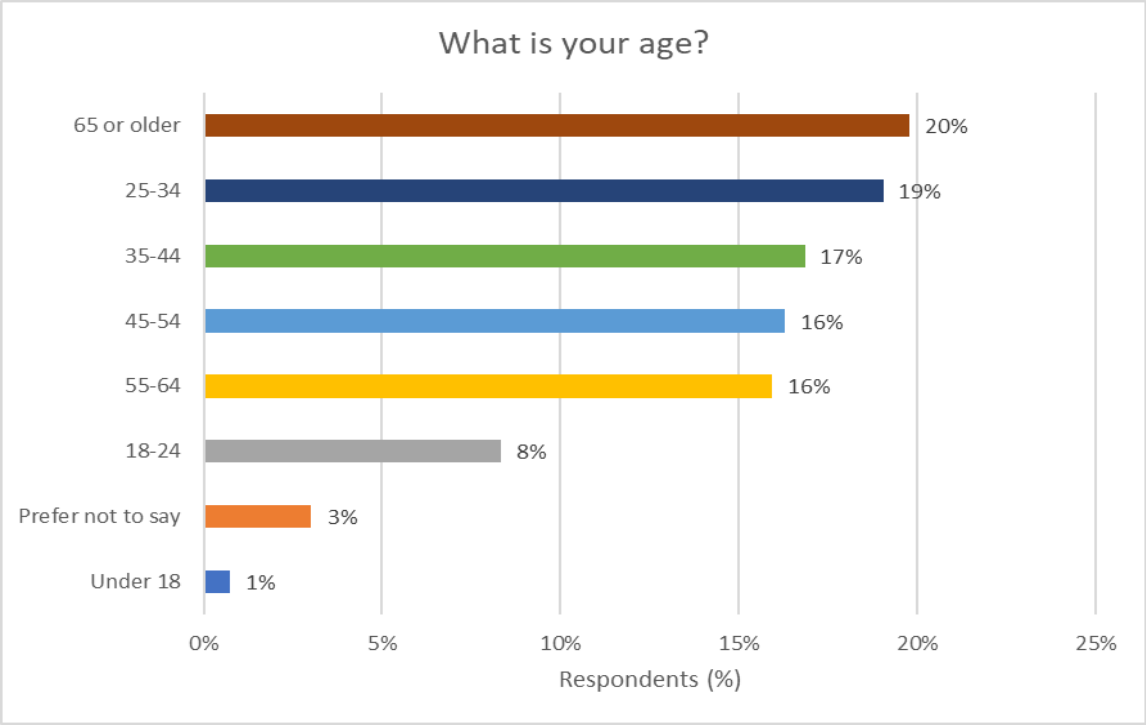

Figure C: Survey responses to the question "What is your age?" N=1092

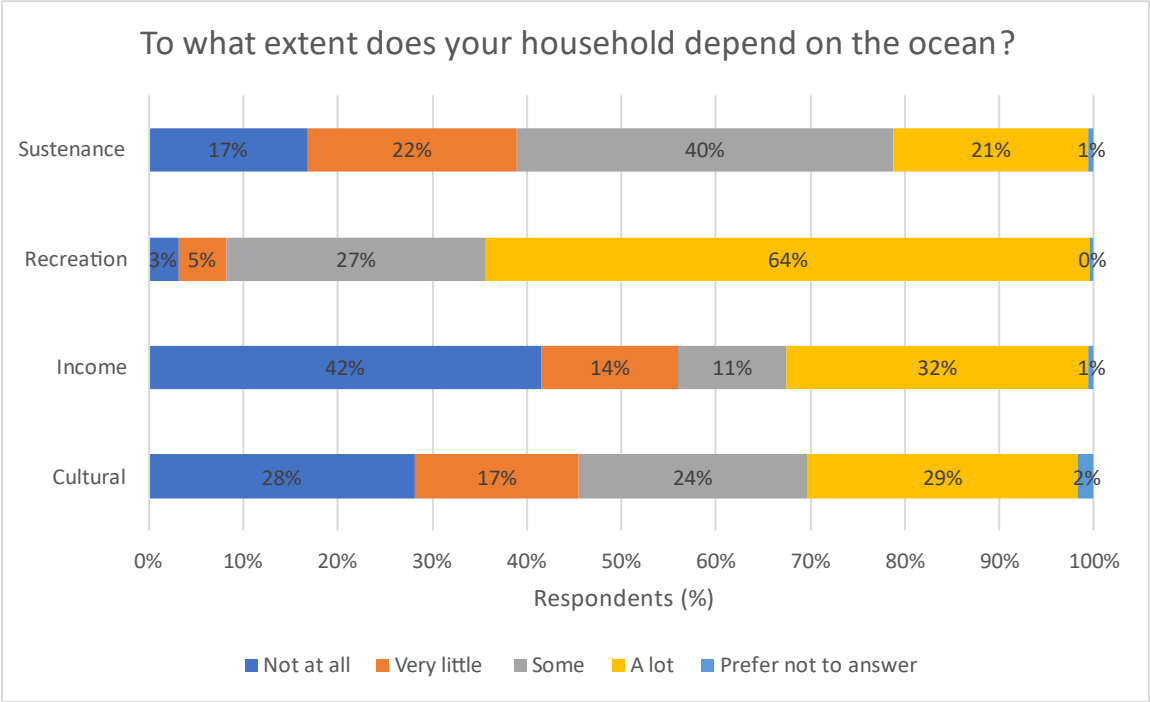

Figure D: Survey responses to the question "To what extent does your household depend on the ocean?" N=1092.

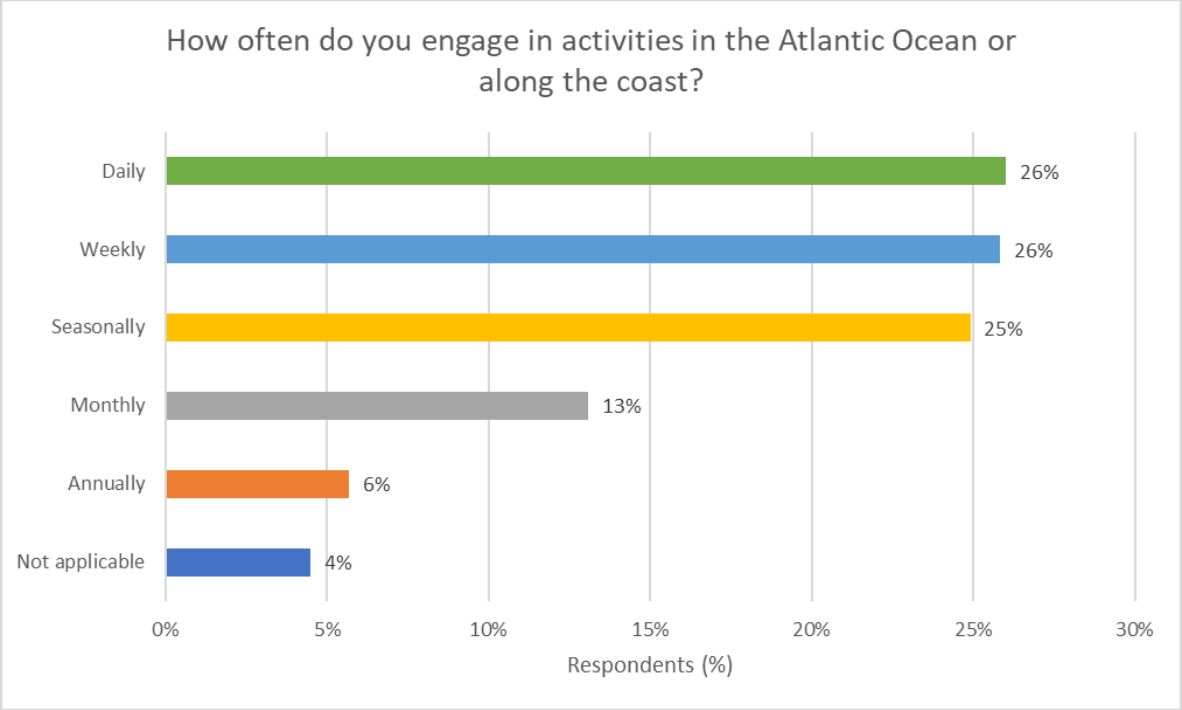

Figure E: Survey responses to the question "How often do you engage in activities in the Atlantic Ocean or along the coast?" N=1092.

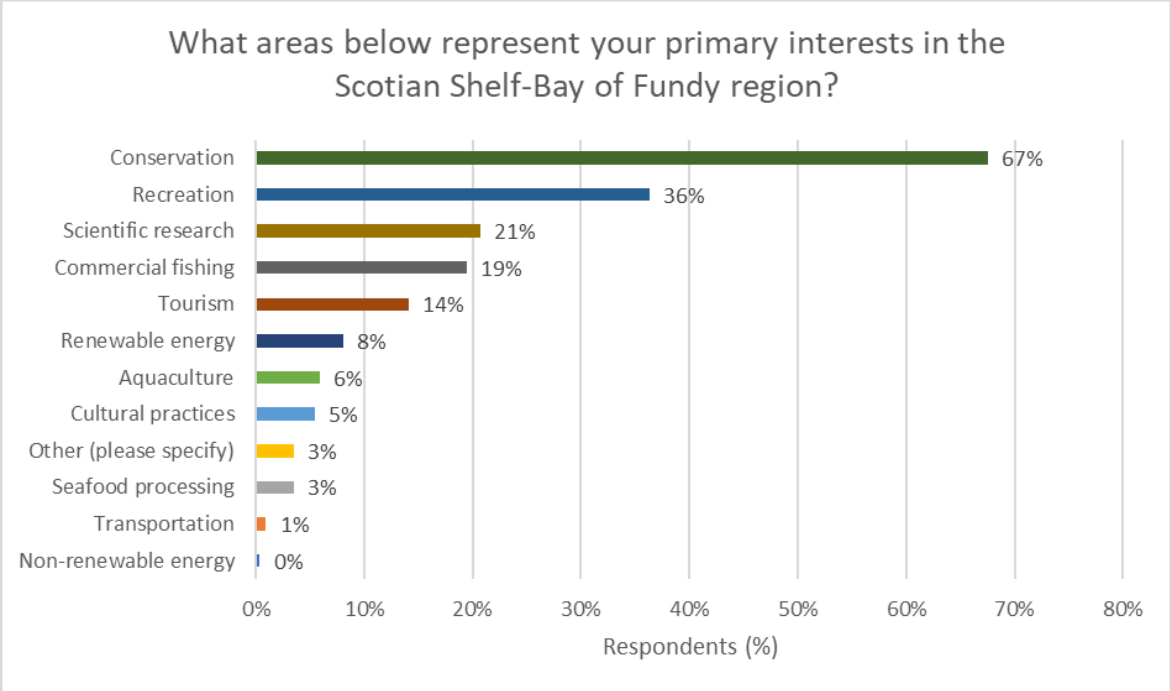

Figure F: Survey responses to the question "What areas below represent your primary interests in the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region?" Totals add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple responses. N=1092.

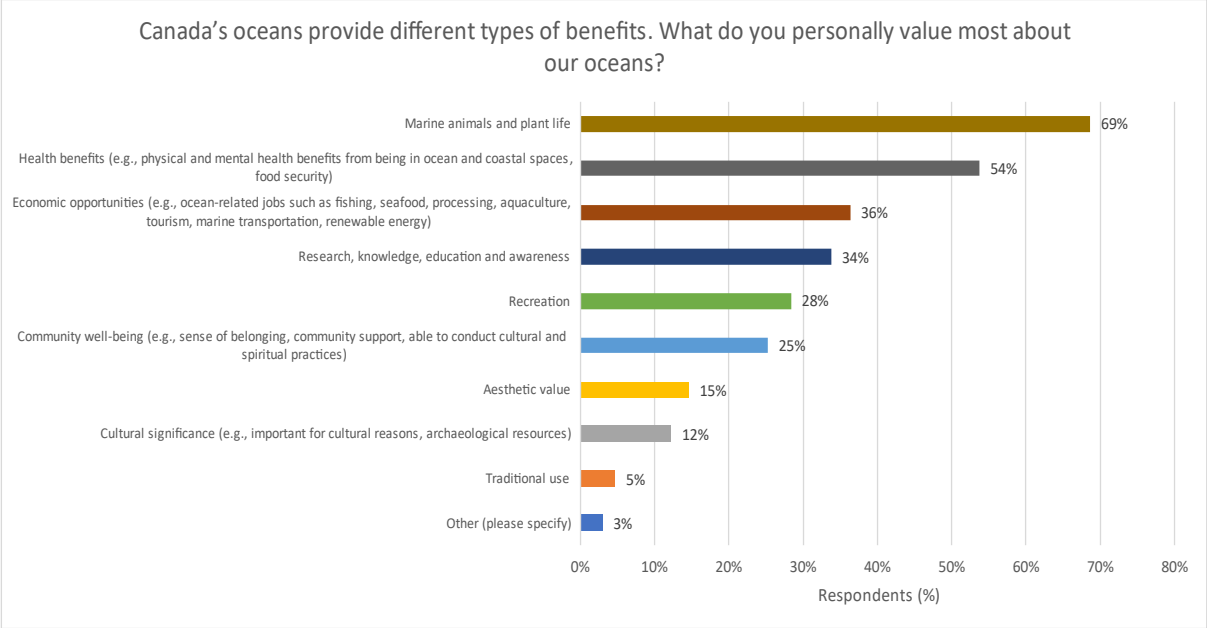

Figure G: Survey responses to the question "Canada's oceans provide different types of benefits. What do you personally value most about our oceans?" Totals add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple responses. N=1092.

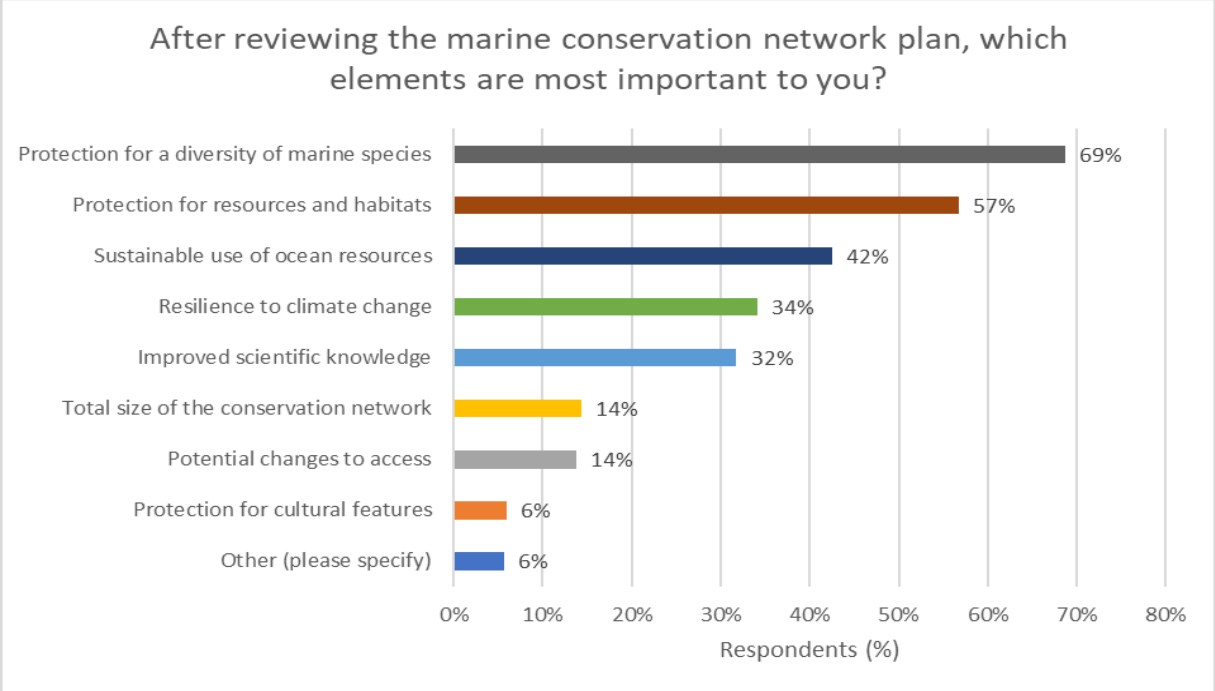

Figure H: Survey responses to the question "After reviewing the marine conservation network plan, which elements are the most important to you?" Totals add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple responses. N=1092.

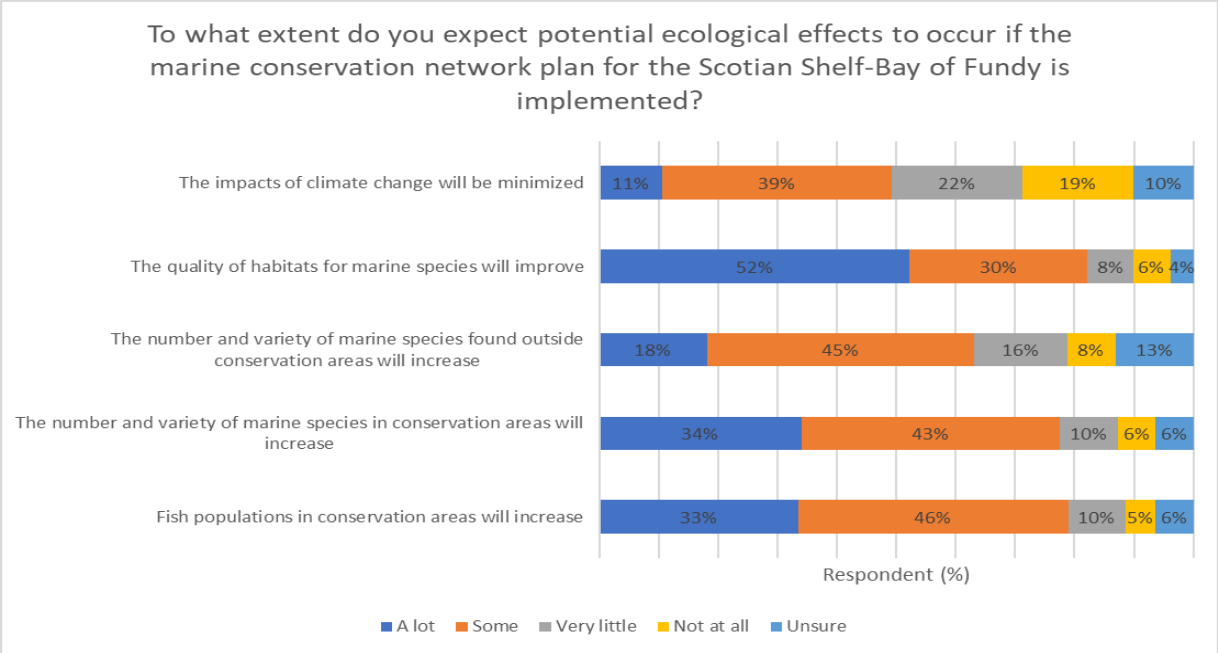

Figure I: Survey responses to the question: "To what extent do you expect potential ecological effects to occur if the marine conservation network plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy is implemented?" N=1092.

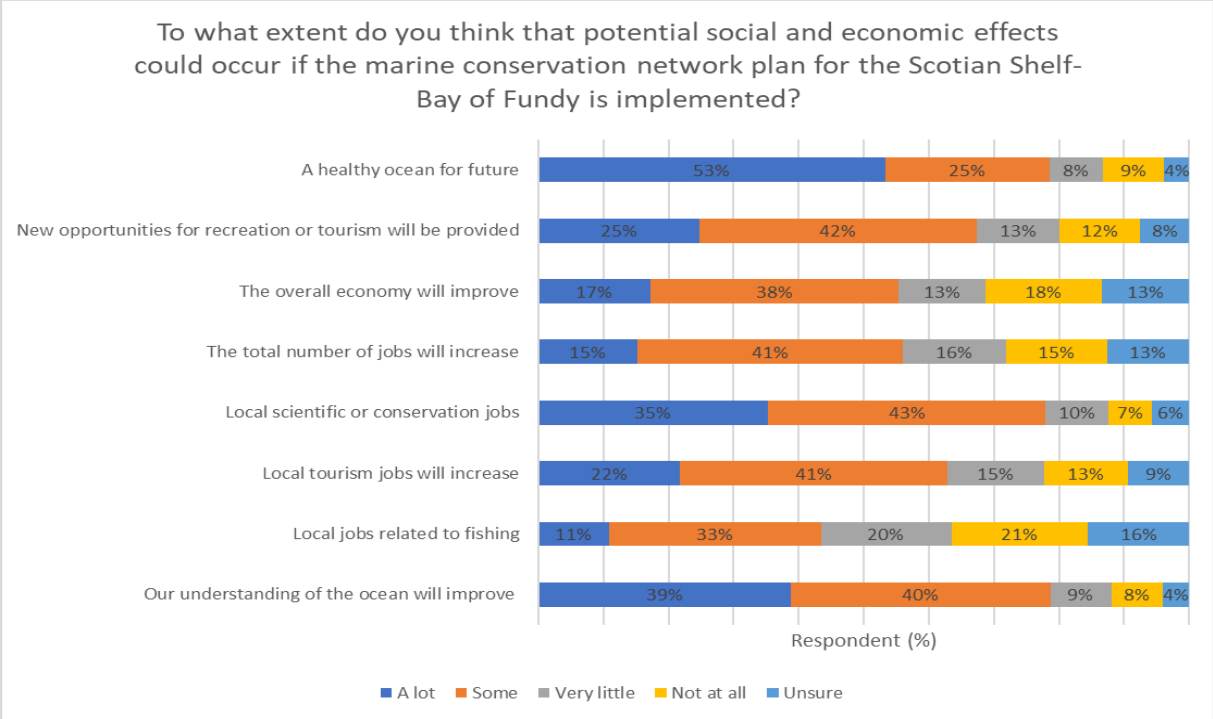

Figure J: Survey responses to the question "To what extent do you think that potential social and economic effects could occur if the marine conservation network plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy is implemented?" N=1092.

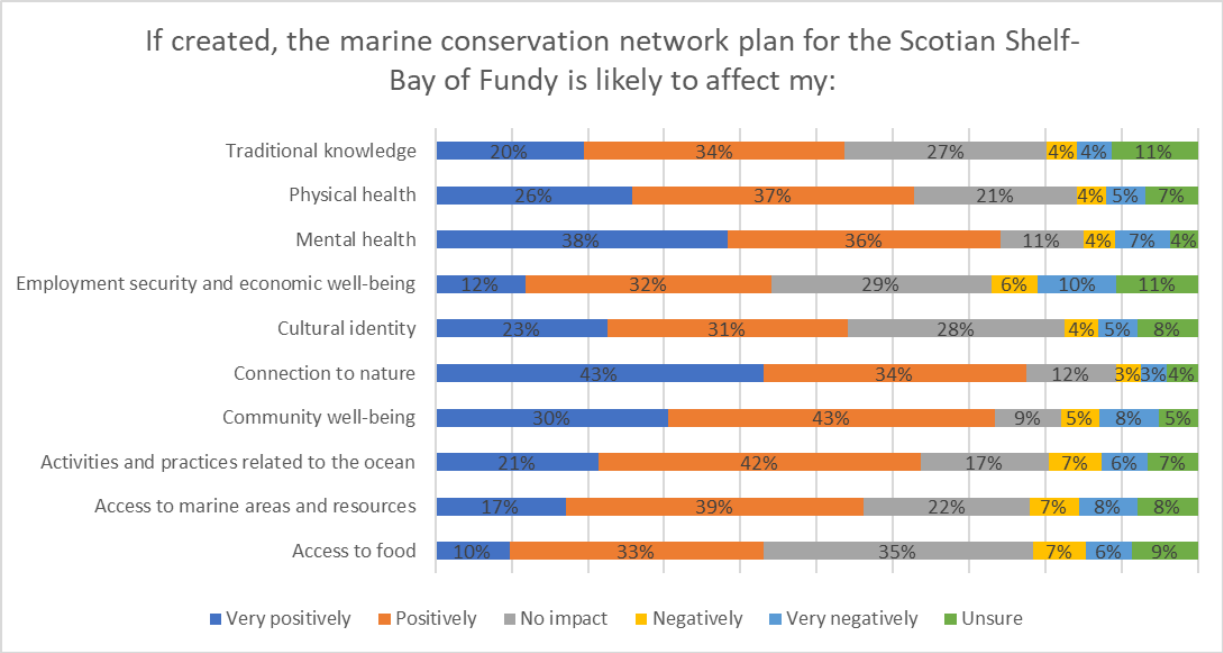

Figure K: Survey responses to the question "If created, the marine conservation network plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy is likely to affect my?" N=1092.

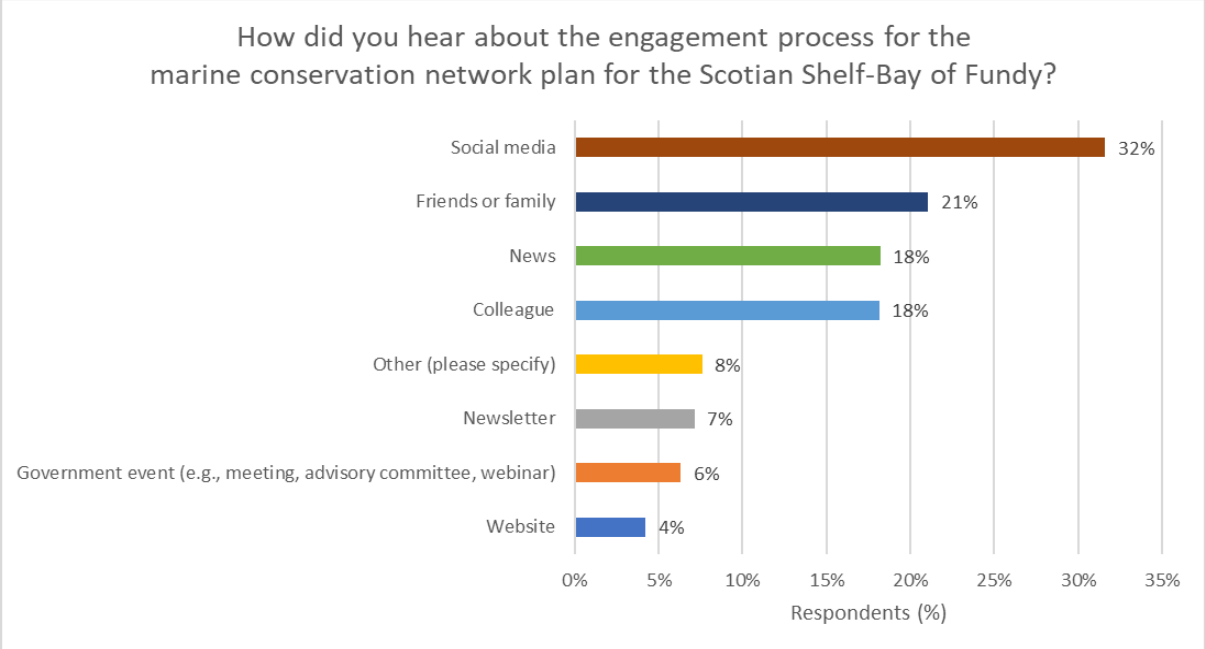

Figure L: Survey responses to the question "How did you hear about the engagement process for the marine conservation network plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy?" Totals add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple responses. N=1092.

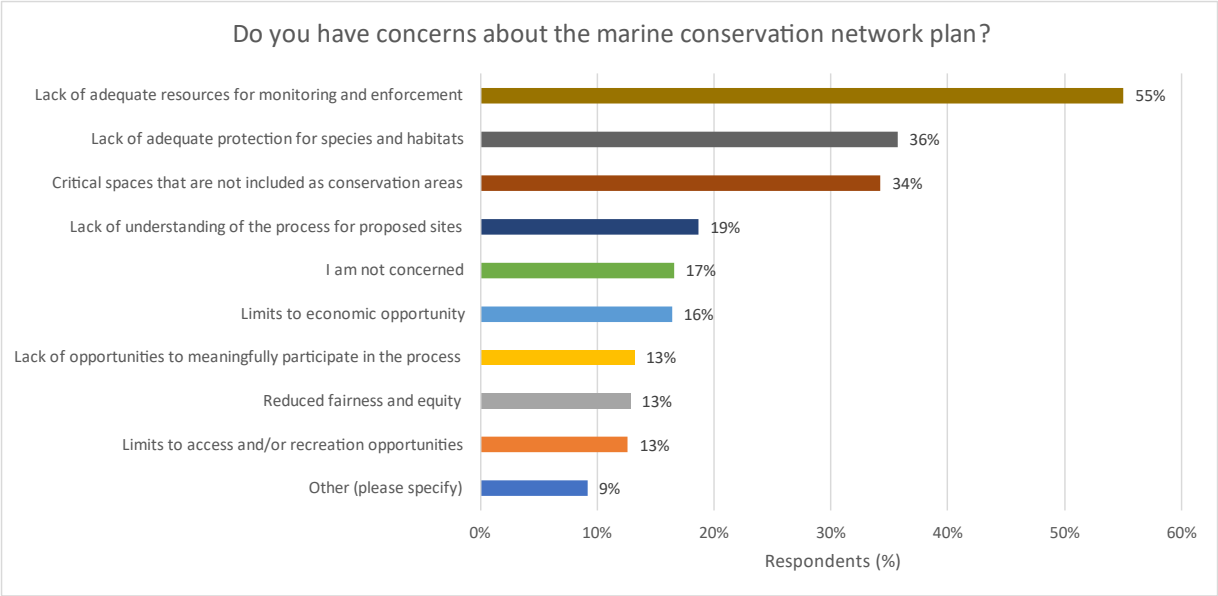

Figure M: Survey responses to the question "Do you have concerns about the marine conservation network plan?" Totals add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple responses. N=1092.

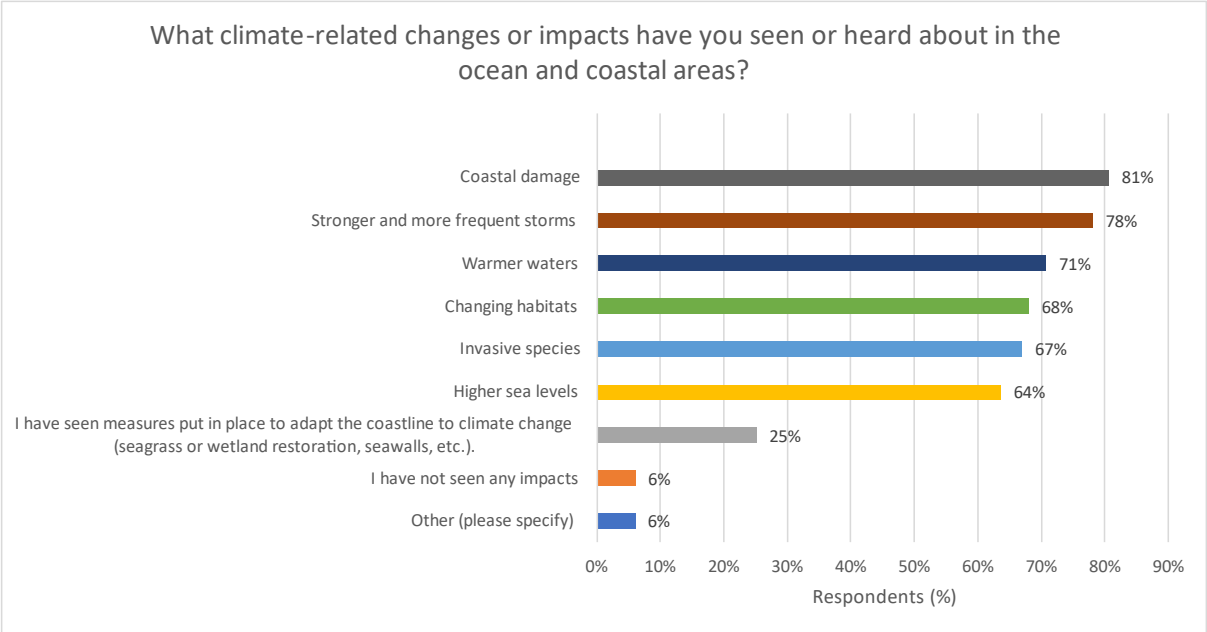

Figure N: Survey responses to the question "What climate-related changes or impacts have you seen or heard about in the ocean and coastal areas?" Totals add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple responses. N=1092.

Appendix B: Summarized Network Feedback by Site

The following section contains feedback on network sites gathered from the public engagement survey, emails and letters submitted by respondents (see Figure 1 for map of network sites). Feedback has been summarized for each site to reflect general themes and no direct quotes are presented.

1. Cobequid Bay

- The site is recognized for its high tides, mudflat and salt marsh ecosystems, and importance for species like the endangered Mud piddock, Atlantic salmon and shorebirds.
- Concern that engineering solutions to rising sea levels may lead to damaging environmental effects.
- Site is used for ecotourism and supports public education.
- Suggestion to increase public awareness of marine conservation initiatives as many locals likely do not know they are ongoing.
- Suggestion to implement a holistic approach for understanding sediment and hydrodynamics in the area when designing the site by mapping the entire Bay.

2. Southern Bight

- The importance of this area for shorebirds and Atlantic salmon migration was highlighted.
- Respondents think the site has the potential to increase tourism in the area and protect fragile intertidal sediments from development.
- Suggestion to expand site boundaries to include the Avon River, up to Highway 101, to encompass the full tidal influence.

3. Chignecto Bay

- Recommendation that future conservation area includes Shepody and Crooked Creek Estuary, the water surrounding Hopewell Rocks, and that the Government of New Brunswick provides adjacent shoreline protection.
- Local interest in the conservation of migrating shorebirds and the protection of the broader ecosystem.
- Respondents expect that the site could provide benefits to the ecosystem if it is well monitored and regulations are enforced.
- Concern that the total area is large and recommend reducing to several small sites.
- Recommend public meetings prior to implementation and providing clarity on the roles of the Canadian Wildlife Service, DFO and the Government of New Brunswick.

4. Salmon Rivers

- Respondents suggest that the site boundary be extended eastward to protect waters alongside Fundy National Park and be connected with the proposed Chignecto Bay site. Further, Shepody and Crooked Creek Estuary should be added.
- Due to the vulnerability of endangered inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon, it is recommended to upgrade to Tier 1 or designate the site by Ministerial Order.
- Respondents recognize Salmon Rivers as an opportunity for collaboration with local Indigenous communities.
- Concern about negative impact to lobster fishing in Lobster Fishing Area (LFA) 36.
- Suggested benefits include increased ecotourism, protection of Indigenous culture, and protection for migratory routes of endangered salmon and shorebirds.

5. Bay of Fundy Horse Mussel Aggregations

- Respondents emphasised that horse mussel aggregations have high conservation value as they provide habitat and food for other species such as American lobster.
- Suggestion to increase the size of the site.
- Concern about the negative impact of this site on the scallop fishery.
- It was indicated that more clarity is needed on how this site relates to other parts of the network, like Grand Manan, and its role in supporting shellfish and fish populations.

6. West Isles and Passages

- Respondents expressed a deep personal and cultural connection to the site, including its role in their families' livelihoods, its historical significance, and its ecological importance.
- Emphasized the site's importance for the local economy, including fishing and tourism (e.g. whale watching, nature tours) and for recreation.
- Potential benefits suggested by respondents include enhanced protection for marine life, increased biodiversity, protection of areas important for a variety of bird species, and improved ecotourism opportunities. Respondents noted that while short-term economic impacts on local fisheries might occur, long-term benefits could include ecosystem recovery and improved fish stocks.
- Concerns were raised about potential economic hardships for local fishing communities and businesses. Particularly, noted for areas around Campobello and Deer Islands.
- Many respondents suggested expanding the site to include additional key areas like Passamaquoddy Bay, Casco, Maces Bay, Green's Point, the Wolves Islands, White Horse Island, West Isles and Passages area, Big L'Etete Passage, and nearby coastal zones.
- Calls for stricter protections against industrial activities such as aquaculture, seaweed

harvesting, potential future industries, and better protection of intertidal zones.
- Recommendations for balancing conservation with economic needs, including ensuring that local fishers and communities are not disproportionately affected.

7. Long Eddy

- Supportive responses suggest that benefits could include improved ecosystem health, increased ecotourism and recreation potential, and benefits to the fishing industry over time as fish stocks improve. It was also expected that an MPA could provide protection from activities such as aquaculture and bottom trawling.
- Recommended to focus on seabirds and whales in the site design, particularly Great and Sooty shearwaters.
- Suggest combining Wolf Banks and Whale Cove Conservation Areas within the site.
- Concern that a conservation area could negatively impact local fisheries such as groundfish, scallop and lobster.
- Opportunity for the Government of New Brunswick to establish coastal protection to improve the conservation of the site.

8. South Grand Manan

- Respondents thought that a conservation area could benefit seabirds, herring, and other juvenile fish species as this site is highly productive and biodiverse. Suggested that short term impacts to fishing industry could be outweighed in the long run by improved ecosystem health.
- Concern that local decrease in Common eiders is related to the overharvesting of rockweed.
- Suggest that additional bird species should be included as conservation priorities, such as razorbills, alcids, and Leach's storm petrels. The inclusion of Machias Seal Island and Ross Island could increase seabird protection in foraging areas. Further, suggestion to include Grand Manan Basin, extending protection to include the Flagg and Whale Cove Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area, as it is a critical feeding ground for pelagic species. An extension of the site to connect to Anchorage Provincial Park and Grand Manan Migratory Bird Sanctuary was also suggested.
- Recommend reducing pressure caused by large fishing boats (seiners, dragging, etc.) to protect local fish stocks and the use of on demand gear to protect whales.
- Concern that aquaculture in the region is damaging the ecosystem.
- Concern there could be negative impact to lobster, halibut and scallop fishing, and subsequent impacts to coastal communities.
- Would benefit from a clearer understanding of how sites integrate with one another, such as the relationship between this site and the Horse Mussel Aggregations.

9. Brier Island

- Concern about the negative impact of this site on the scallop fishery.
- Suggestion that Brier Island be changed to a Tier 1 site as it is an area of high ecological importance for whales, seabirds, and plants, as well as strong cultural significance to the Mi'kmaq.
- Potential opportunity for community education on marine life and traditional Mi'kmaq uses of the area.
- Brier Island has a well-established eco-tourism industry that could benefit from an MPA.

10. Chebogue

- Chebogue is thought to be ecologically diverse, containing dense eelgrass beds and saltmarsh, and be of overall importance to marine species and seabirds.
- Suggestion to extend site boundary to the Tusket Estuary for the protection of rare estuarine plants like the Eastern baccharis.

11. Eel Bay

- Concerns that an MPA will infringe on the livelihoods of harvesters and negatively impact the local community.
- Suggestion that aquaculture be prohibited from occurring within the site.
- Eel Bay is adjacent to a potential terrestrial protection area that would improve the site.
- Area noted as being particularly important for shorebird species.
- Suggested that an MPA could provide an opportunity to improve ocean literacy.

12. McNutts Island

- Area is known to have a diversity of seabirds and marine mammals, and would benefit from additional surveying of the marine environment.
- Concern that the proximity to open net-pen fish farms would degrade the marine environment, making the site less effective. Suggestion that aquaculture be prohibited from occurring within the site.
- Respondents noted opportunity to increase ocean literacy.
- Concern that a protected area could have negative impacts on local fisheries, particularly scallop.

13. Pemsɨk

- Noted as an opportunity to connect terrestrial and marine ecosystems, preserve culturally important species, and support Indigenous values and histories, and the

transmission of traditional ecological knowledge down through generations. The site could provide protection for the diversity of species in the area, particularly at-risk species and shorebirds, and reduce unsustainable fishing practices.
- Concerns that access would be restricted for recreational purposes like hunting, fishing, boating, and that resistance from the local community would deter progress on the site.
- Recommend a community-up planning process.
- Potential for local economic improvement through tourism and educational opportunities.
- Concerns the site will cause negative economic impact on the local fishing industry and community.
- Large size of the site is of concern as it is unclear what informed the preliminary boundary and its scientific rationale.
- Suggestion to increase transparency on Indigenous involvement and management, and more ability for other marine users, like the fishing industry, to be involved in the process.
- Ensure clear communication and involvement of local communities, including better engagement and monitoring.
- Consider broader scope to include nearby areas towards Liverpool that are impacted by coastal development and finfish aquaculture.

14. LaHave Islands

- LaHave Islands is recognized as a high-quality habitat that would benefit the connectivity of the network. Noted its importance for a wide range of marine species and shorebirds.
- Recommendation to collaborate with Parks Canada as National Marine Conservation Areas may be a better fit for the site due to its considerations of community well-being and emphasis on access and education.
- Opportunity for site to benefit the ecotourism industry.

15. Sambro Ledges-Prospect

- Respondents indicate that the site could provide educational opportunities and act as a tourist destination due to its proximity to Halifax.
- Identified that local research institutes in Halifax could benefit from the closeness of a conservation area, and the site would benefit from research and observation over time.
- Noted as a productive ecosystem that supports a variety of species.
- Suggestion to improve community engagement through using mail flyers.
- Suggestion to create a plan for the restoration of eelgrass within the site.

16. Martinique Beach and Musquodoboit Harbour

- Concern that water quality at the site may be impacted by open septic systems in the Musquodoboit River. Suggested that an MPA could be an opportunity to improve waste management and enforce water treatment.
- Recommendation to extend site into the adjacent estuary, dunes, and marsh habitat to protect seabirds.
- Concerns that a conservation area could reduce public access and have a negative impact on people who use the area for subsistence fishing and economic use, in particular the lobster fishery.

17. St. Mary's (Napu'saqnuk) River and Estuary

- The site is valuable for freshwater and estuarian protection. It includes rich algal diversity and dense eelgrass beds. The site was noted as an important link between marine and inland ecosystems. Respondents highlighted that estuaries must be protected alongside marine and terrestrial spaces.
- Concerns noted about forestry practices and their impacts on water quality and levels in the river.
- Benefits suggested by respondents include increased research programs, prevention of large-scale dredging, support for the preservation of eelgrass, and recreational fishing opportunities.
- Opportunity for education on Indigenous culture and knowledge related to the area.
- Suggestion to protect nesting areas from human disturbance to aid endangered species recovery.

18. Country Island

- Recommendation to extend to Country and Isaacs Harbours where there is tern foraging habitat.
- Noted that site would benefit from additional scientific research.
- Concern that the local community will be resistant.

19. Canso Ledges – Sugar Harbour Islands

- Concern that a conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry, particularly in LFAs 31A and 31B.
- Unclear how protecting the area will provide protection from climate change and ecosystem changes.
- Concern for the large size of the site.

20. MacNamaras Island

- No substantive site-specific feedback was provided via survey.
- Other correspondences indicated that the site has high conservation value due to eelgrass beds while also noting concern with finfish aquaculture development.

21. Fleur-de-Lis Coast

- No substantive site-specific feedback was provided via survey.
- Letters suggested that the site be changed to Tier 1 due to proximity to the Fourchu Coast and Gabarus Wilderness Areas, the availability of supporting research, and the sites' significance for marine plants and migratory birds.

22. Bird Islands

- Suggested to expand boundaries to include seabird foraging areas and underwater habitats used by whales.
- Recommendation to collaborate with the Mi'kmaq to extend site around Cape Dauphin.

23. Ingonish

- As the site is alongside Cape Breton Highlands National Park, it was recommended that Parks Canada be involved in site establishment.
- Suggested benefits for the tourism industry and alignment with the conservation ethic of the region.
- Noted as an important area with high concentrations of eelgrass and rockweed.

24. Aspy Bay

- Site would benefit from an interpretive centre when established to inform the local community and tourists.
- Suggestion to engage with local experts and community members during site design and establishment.
- Suggestion that the site could be better lead by Parks Canada due to its proximity to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park and their reputation in the region.

25. Bras d'Or Lake

- Unique ecosystem where conservation and protection are imperative. Proposed extension into estuaries and rivers that feed into the lake.
- Aquaculture sites may be missing from site description.
- Concern around coastal development damaging the fragile ecosystem. Recommend measures for mitigating impacts and educating homeowners. Further, should improve

sewage disposal in the lake and enforce boat cleaning to prevent the spread of invasive species.
- Provide support to community members to get involved and create common goals for a conservation area.
- Suggestion that once the site is established, an interpretive centre should be developed.

26. Southwest Bank

- Respondents identified that the site is important for seabirds and shorebirds, in particular phalaropes.

27. Western Jordan Basin

- Suggestions that this site is of high value due to benthic topographic complexity, the prevalence of at risk species identified by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), including Cusk, White hake, American plaice, and Spiny dogfish. Due to it's location in the Gulf of Maine, it could also be of value for North Atlantic right whales.

28. Georges Bank

- Concern that a conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry, particularly the scallop fishery, and coastal communities. The bank contains important scallop habitat which is relied on by the fishing industry.
- Desire for more information on what science supported site selection and how this site aligns to network conservation objectives.
- Suggestion to improve enforcement of quotas and concern that if the site is established, it will not be well enforced.
- Concern that drag fisheries in the area have negative impacts on fish stocks and the benthic ecosystem on the bank. Recommend reducing impacts by stopping the fishery.
- Suggestion to prohibit oil, gas, and wind development, along with other industrial activities.

29. LaHave Basin

- Concern that a conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry and coastal communities.
- Concerns around enforcement of fishing activities.
- Suggested prohibiting mobile bottom gear.

30. Scotian Gulf

- Concern that conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry and coastal communities.

31. Central Scotian Slope, Rise and Abyss

- Respondent suggested offshore location could reduce impact to user groups.
- Suggestion to convert the site to a Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMA) with no extraction of marine resources.

32. Inner Shelf Sea Pen Field

- Did not receive substantive feedback.

33. Logan Canyon

- Concern that conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry and coastal communities.

34. Sable Island Bank

- Concern that conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry, specifically scallop and clam, and coastal communities. The bank contains important habitat for scallop and quahogs that support commercial fisheries.
- Noted that area is under consideration for offshore renewable energy development.
- Suggested that Sable Island Bank is a unique and highly valuable habitat.
- The site should be extended to areas around Sable Island to enhance terrestrial protection for birds, bats, and horses, while providing additional protection to marine species like seals, whales, and fish.
- Benefits could include enhanced pollutant management (garbage, noise), reduced marine traffic, and protection from entanglements for seals and whales.
- Recommended to increase enforcement and monitoring of fisheries in the region.

35. Canso Bank and Channels

- Concern that conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry, specifically snow crab, and coastal communities.

36. Misaine Bank and Laurentian Channel

- Concern that conservation area could negatively impact the fishing industry, specifically snow crab, and coastal communities.

37. Eastern Shoal

- Concern that impacts to fishing industry, particularly clam, could lead to negative economic outcomes.
- Do not want to see this included in the network due to previous consultations and conversations on the site in 2009-2010.

38. Cold Seeps

- Did not receive substantive feedback.

Appendix C: Public Engagement Survey Questions

Creating a Conservation Network in the Scotian Shelf and Bay of Fundy

The waters of the Scotian Shelf and the Bay of Fundy have been home to rich marine life and habitats for millennia. They are a source of food and employment and have provided for First Nations since time immemorial. These waters are home to species including:

- American Lobster
- Atlantic salmon
- a variety of groundfish
- deep sea corals and sponges
- lush kelp beds and eelgrass meadows
- North Atlantic right whales
- northern bottlenose whales

These marine ecosystems are under increasing pressure from human use and environmental changes. A marine conservation network offers greater protection for marine species, habitats and ecosystems. Marine conservation networks are a collection of individual conservation areas. They can include marine protected areas and other conservation measures, like marine refuges. Networks support conservation over the long term while minimizing impacts on ocean users.

A Conservation Network Plan is being created by the Government of Canada through:

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Environment and Climate Change Canada – Canadian Wildlife Service
- Parks Canada

This will be created with input from:

- The Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia
- First Nations and Indigenous organizations
- stakeholders
- Canadians

To support Canada's goal to protect 30% of our oceans by 2030, we are working to protect areas in the Scotian Shelf and the Bay of Fundy. From **April 29 to June 29, 2024**, the public can provide input on the Conservation Network Plan. Feedback from this survey will be used by the Government of Canada to inform the final Conservation Network Plan and conservation planning for years to come. Feedback will be summarized in a "What We Heard" document and shared on Fisheries and Oceans Canada's website.

We suggest that you review the proposed Conservation Network Plan before filling out the survey. **The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete**.

Please note that this survey is anonymous. ***We ask that you do not provide any personal**

information about yourself or any other individual(s) while responding to open text questions in this survey. To provide feedback on behalf of a group or organization, or if you have any questions about the survey, please email: **MaritimesMPAs@dfo-mpo.gc.ca**.

Participating in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue at any time by closing the window of your browser. By completing and submitting the survey:

- you are aware that the combined data resulting from this survey may be used by the Government of Canada in public presentations and publications, as well as for internal research purposes; and
- you consent to participate in this consultation.

Please also note that answers are not auto-saved. To ensure your response is captured, complete and submit the survey during a single session, without exiting the browser.

1. To what extent does your household depend on the ocean? scale of: Not at all, very little, some, a lot, prefer not to answer
    - For cultural reasons (e.g., visiting cultural sites, harvesting traditional medicines)
    - For income (e.g., employment, livelihoods related to ocean activities)
    - For recreation (e.g., recreational fishing, boating, swimming, tourism)
    - For sustenance (e.g., food for personal consumption)

2. What areas below represent your primary interests in the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region? (Select up to 2).
    - Aquaculture
    - Commercial fishing
    - Conservation
    - Cultural practices
    - Non-renewable energy
    - Recreation
    - Renewable energy
    - Scientific research
    - Seafood processing
    - Tourism
    - Transportation
    - Other (please specify) (open ended, 150 words max)

How often do you engage in activities in the Atlantic Ocean or along the coast?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seasonally
- Annually
- Not applicable

4. What climate-related changes or impacts have you seen or heard about in the ocean and

coastal areas? (Select all that apply)

- Changing habitats
- Coastal damage
- Invasive species
- Higher sea levels
- Stronger and more frequent storms
- Warmer waters
- I have not seen any impacts
- I have seen measures put in place to adapt the coastline to climate change (seagrass or wetland restoration, seawalls, etc.).
- Other (please specify) (open ended, 150 words max)

5. Canada's oceans provide different types of benefits. What do you personally value most about our oceans? (Select up to three)
    - Aesthetic value
    - Community well-being (e.g., sense of belonging, community support, able to conduct cultural and spiritual practices)
    - Cultural significance (e.g., important for cultural reasons, archaeological resources)
    - Economic opportunities (e.g., ocean-related jobs such as fishing, seafood, processing, aquaculture, tourism, marine transportation, renewable energy)
    - Health benefits (e.g., physical and mental health benefits from being in ocean and coastal spaces, food security)
    - Marine animals and plant life
    - Research, knowledge, education and awareness
    - Tourism and recreation
    - Traditional use
    - Other (please specify, open ended, 150 words max)
6. Around the world, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) have been created to help to protect our oceans using a variety of legal tools. Marine conservation networks are a collection of individual conservation areas. These areas are connected by species movements and other ecological processes. Networks offer greater protection to Canada's marine species, habitats and ecosystems. Networks support conservation over the long term, while minimizing impacts on ocean users. Each site has its own conservation objectives to protect habitats and species. Conservation networks will include sites with different shapes, sizes and protection levels. Sites may also be protected using different tools, including by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada. The draft Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region contains 38 sites covering approximately 26% of the region.

To what extent do you support creating new marine conservation areas (marine protected areas

and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) as proposed in the draft Conservation Network Plan in the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region?

- Scale of: *strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose, undecided*

7. Why do you or do you not support creating new conservation areas, as proposed in the marine conservation network plan? (open ended question, 150 words max)
8. To what extent do you expect potential ecological effects to occur if the proposed Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Conservation Network Plan is implemented. (Scale of: A lot, some, very little, not at all, unsure)
    - Fish populations in conservation areas will increase
    - The number and variety of marine species in conservation areas will increase
    - The number and variety of marine species found outside conservation areas will increase
    - The quality of habitats for marine species will improve
    - The impacts of climate change will be minimized
9. To what extent do you think that potential social and economic effects could occur if the proposed Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Conservation Network Plan is implemented? (Scale of: A lot, some, very little, not at all, unsure)
    - Our understanding of the ocean will improve
    - Local jobs related to fishing (commercial, recreational) will increase
    - Local tourism jobs will increase
    - Local scientific or conservation jobs will increase
    - The total number of jobs will increase
    - The overall economy will improve
    - New opportunities for recreation or tourism will be provided
    - A healthy ocean for future generations will be provided
10. If created, the proposed Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Conservation Network Plan is likely to affect my: (Scale of: A lot, some, very little, not at all, unsure)
    - Access to food
    - Access to marine areas and resources
    - Activities and practices related to the ocean
    - Community well-being
    - Connection to nature
    - Cultural identity
    - Employment security and economic well-being
    - Mental health
    - Physical health
    - Traditional knowledge
11. Do you have concerns about the proposed Conservation Network Plan? (Select up to 3)

- Critical spaces that are not included as conservation areas
- Lack of adequate protection for species and habitats
- Lack of adequate resources for monitoring and enforcement
- Lack of opportunities to meaningfully participate in the process
- Lack of understanding of the process for proposed sites
- Limits to access and/or recreation opportunities
- Limits to economic opportunity
- Reduced fairness and equity
- Other (please specify) (open ended, 150 words max)
- I am not concerned

12. After reviewing the draft Conservation Network Plan, which elements are most important to you? (Select up to 3)
    - Improved scientific knowledge
    - Potential changes to access
    - Protection for a diversity of marine species
    - Protection for resources and habitats
    - Protection for cultural features
    - Resilience to climate change
    - Sustainable use of ocean resources
    - Total size of the draft conservation network
    - Other (please specify) (open ended, 150 words max)
13. How did you hear about the engagement process for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Conservation Network Plan?
    - Colleague
    - Friends or family
    - Government event (e.g., meeting, open house, advisory committee, webinar)
    - News
    - Newsletter
    - Social media
    - Website
    - Other (please specify – open ended, 150 words max)
14. Is there any other input you would like to provide about the draft Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region and how it may affect you and your family? What, if anything, would make this proposal better? (Open ended question, 150 words max)
15. Do you want to provide feedback about specific sites in the Conservation Network Plan? (Yes/No)
    - No – finish survey.
    - Yes – Please review the site descriptions in the Conservation Network Plan and select name of site. (Cobequid Bay, Southern Bight, Chignecto Bay, Salmon Rivers,

Bay of Fundy Horse Mussel Aggregations, West Isles and Passages, Long Eddy, South Grand Manan, Brier Island, Chebogue, Eel Bay, McNutts Island, Pemsɨk, LaHave Islands, Sambro Ledges-Prospect, Martinique Beach and Musquodoboit Harbour, St. Mary's (Napu'saqnuk) River and Estuary, Country Island, Canso Ledges-Sugar Harbour Islands, MacNamaras Island, Fleur-de-Lis Coast, Bird Islands, Ingonish, Aspy Bay, Bras d'Or Lake, Southwest Bank, Western Jordan Basin, Georges Bank, LaHave Basin, Scotian Gulf, Central Scotian Slope, Rise and Abyss, Inner Shelf Sea Pen Field, Sable Island Bank, Logan Canyon, Canso Bank and Channels, Misaine Bank and Laurentian Channel, Eastern Shoal, Cold Seeps)

- a. Is the site description accurate? Are we missing information (such as commonly occurring activities, important ecological features, relevant cultural values)? (open ended – 300 words max)
- b. Why is this site of interest to you? For example, do you conduct activities in the site, is it culturally important to you, does it contain species or habitats that you consider important? Do the proposed boundaries and conservation features capture the features that are important to you? (open ended – 300 words max)
- c. Do you foresee any benefits and/or negative impacts if this site is included in the network? (open ended – 300 words max)
- d. What, if anything, could be improved? (open ended – 300 words max)

16. Would you like to provide comments on another site?
    - Yes – write name of site and answer questions.
    - No – finish survey.

These last few questions will allow us to compare the survey results among different groups of respondents. Your answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

17. Where do you live?
    - Southern New Brunswick (Charlotte County, Saint John County, Albert County, Westmorland County)
    - Other counties in New Brunswick (Kings, Queens, Sunbury, York, Carleton, Victoria, Madawaska, Restigouche, Gloucester, Northumberland, Kent)
    - Southern Nova Scotia (Lunenburg County, Queens County, Shelburne County, Yarmouth County, Digby County)
    - Cape Breton, Nova Scotia (Cape Breton County, Richmond County, Inverness County, Victoria County)
    - North Shore, Nova Scotia (Cumberland County, Colchester County, Pictou County, Antigonish County)
    - Valley, Nova Scotia (Annapolis County, Kings County, Hants County)
    - Eastern Nova Scotia (Guysborough County)
    - Halifax County, Nova Scotia
    - Other provinces and territories in Canada

- Outside Canada

18. What is your gender?
    - Woman
    - Man
    - Non-binary
    - Two-spirit
    - Prefer to self-identify (open ended)
    - Prefer not to say

19. What is your age?
    - Under 18
    - 18-24
    - 25-34
    - 35-44
    - 45-54
    - 55-64
    - 65 or older
    - Prefer not to say

Thank you for completing the survey. To provide additional feedback, please email MaritimesMPAs@dfo-mpo.gc.ca. We thank you for your time.