



Guysborough County Inshore  
Fishermen's Association  
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Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association is a commercial fishing not-for-profit organization accredited by the provincial government under the fisheries Organization Support Act. We represent multi-species fish harvesters who reside in eastern Guysborough County. There are 140 members of multi-species license holders with fisheries conducted in the inshore, mid-shore and offshore. The association has a volunteer board of directors who are elected from the membership. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in discussions regarding positive and negative impacts of oil and gas exploratory drilling in the joint jurisdictional waters off Nova Scotia. The health and viability of Canada's seafood industry is paramount to the economy here in Nova Scotia and must be preserved. The dire economic picture here in Nova Scotia requires action and an increase of growth in all sectors. We acknowledge offshore oil and gas activities have provided economic benefit to our province in the past. Activities associated with this industry have been performed safely with impacts restricted to the ocean space proximate to the rig. We support the exploration of future oil and gas activities in Nova Scotia waters if other marine users such as the fishing industry is able to continue seafood harvesting unimpeded, safety regulations are followed and insured bonds are put forth to secure remediation efforts if an accident does occur. The strategic environmental assessments SEAs are complete for this study area, together with this regional assessment, the offshore wind regional assessment report and future consultations; we believe it is possible to plan new oil and gas exploratory activities. That being said there are valid concerns and mitigation tools that will require our attention to complete this regional assessment adequately.

The valued components mentioned in the TOR are ❶ environment; ❷ health, social and economic conditions; and ❸ the exercise of Indigenous rights with respect to fishing practices. We note that the valued components listed in the Shelburne Basin Venture Exploration Drilling Project are:

- fish and fish habitat
- marine mammal and sea turtles
- migratory birds
- current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by Aboriginal peoples
- special areas
- species at risk
- commercial fisheries

GCIFA suggests "commercial fisheries conducted in the study area" be added to the valued components list. There is substantial fishing activity carried out in the study area. Commercial fisheries were identified in the Shelburne basin venture exploration drilling project as a valued component and that study area was 250 km offshore where there is less commercial fishing than this current regional assessment of offshore oil and gas exploratory drilling. We suggests including descriptive words associated with each of

these Valued Components listed in the TOR for clarification of what “Environment” will entail. Example: Fish and Fish Habitat, Atmospheric GHG, ocean noise etc. Social and economic conditions should include cultural uses within the study area. Economic conditions means commercial fish species? Or coastal communities’ reliance and survival on wild caught fisheries carried out in the study area?

GCIFA suggests several scenarios are examined within the study area to assess drilling in a range of depths and distances from shore. We suggest a marine spatial planning tool such as a Marxan analysis be used to highlight areas of least conflict with other marine users with other required parameters of oil and gas exploratory drilling. Out of respect for the fishing industry already operating in the study area, we request high fishing activity areas be highlighted in the final report as “areas to avoid”

Completing this regional assessment in 6 months given the size of the study area could result in the assessment of valued components not being given the time and consideration they deserve. We request an extension of 6 months for conducting this regional assessment. We suggest possibly decreasing the size of the study area if timeline extension is not granted. Dividing the study area into 2 parts and performing this RA on only 1 part. The sheer size of this ocean space will require consultations with the inshore fishing industry and the offshore fishing industry. We have members who fish inshore and offshore areas of the Scotian Shelf.

GCIFA recommends working groups such as the advisory groups that were employed in the NL oil and gas exploratory assessment. Subject matter experts are a great tool as well.

We request an engagement plan for fisheries be included in the TOR. The study area covers ocean space from the edge of browns bank to St Anns bank MPA. Exploratory drilling in the study area could affect fishers from Digby to Sydney and any coastal fishing community in between.

At this point we feel an exclusion regulation of oil and gas exploratory drilling projects should not proceed without a new Impact Agency Environmental Assessment. If this regional assessment is performed thoroughly and a detailed report is produced that includes comprehensive impacts to all marine users and ocean life, we may be compelled to support an exclusion regulation in the future pending this RA. Oil and gas exploratory drilling is not a new activity in the Nova Scotia/Canada offshore waters.

Impacts on fishers need to be addressed in the TOR. Fisheries landings data should be included as an appendix to the report.