

**SUBMISSION TO THE**  
**NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**  
**AND NUNAVIK MARINE REGION WILDLIFE BOARD**

**FOR**

**Information: X**

**Decision:**

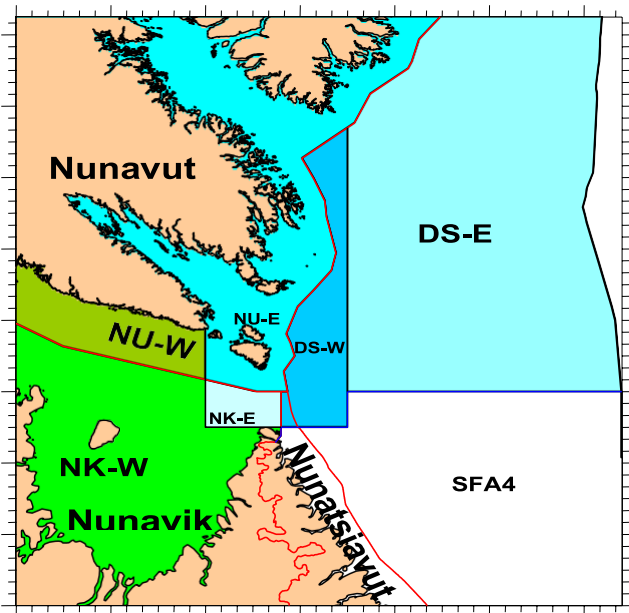
**Recommendation:**

**Issue: Changes in management of Northern Shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*)**

**Map:**

Blue areas – Eastern Assessment Zone

Green areas – Western Assessment Zone



Northern shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*)



Striped shrimp (*Pandalus montagui*)

## **Background**

Two shrimp species (*P. borealis* and *P. montagui*) occur in the Northern shrimp fishery that takes place in the Davis Strait and eastern Hudson Strait. As described below, there are now two separate stock assessment areas in this fishery, the North Stock Assessment Region (NSAR) and the South Stock Assessment Region (SSAR). The Shrimp Fishing Area (SFA) structure remains for management and allocation purposes. Nunavut and Nunavik entities have allocations in both the Western Assessment Zone (WAZ) and the Eastern Assessment Zone (EAZ) (Appendix 1).

In March 2025, Northern Shrimp (*P. borealis*) were assessed under a new peer-reviewed stock assessment framework that redefined assessment areas to better align with distribution of the species' biological attributes. The adopted framework combines the former management areas into two regions: the NSAR—comprising the WAZ, EAZ, shrimp fishing area (SFA) 4, and the northern portion of SFA 5—and the SSAR—including SFA 6 and NAFO areas 3LNO and the southern portion of SFA 5. Under this revised approach, both stocks would be classified within the Healthy Zone of DFO's Precautionary Approach Framework, if the proposed Upper Stock Reference (USR) is adopted. Striped Shrimp (*P. montagui*) in the EAZ, WAZ, and SFA 4 continue to be assessed and managed at the SFA level and all were estimated to be in the Healthy Zone.

### ***Management implications resulting from the new stock assessment for Northern Shrimp***

A Management Transition Working Group was established to develop recommendations for the Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee (NSAC) membership in 2026 on management implications resulting from the new stock assessment approach for Northern Shrimp (*P. borealis*), including the basis by which the distribution of fishable biomass within the NSAR and SSAR respectively would inform total allowable catch (TAC) setting at the traditional SFA level, and a management approach for SFA 5 North and SFA 5 South.

At the next stock update, DFO Science will provide the proportion of fishable biomass in each Assessment Zone, SFA and management unit where applicable using data from the four most recent assessments. Pending NSAC support, the TAC recommendation for each Assessment Zone and SFA will be based on a four-year moving average of the fishable biomass, to smooth year-to-year fluctuations.

Offshore industry members have requested to increase flexibility to address catchability concerns in the EAZ and WAZ, by increasing allocations by 5% (after the TAC is established) for all management areas in the NSAR. This approach was tentatively supported by NU entities through the working group. If this approach is supported by NSAC on January 20, 2026, NSAC views on TAC for each Assessment Zone/SFA / management unit will be sought using the approach described above, following the stock update in March 2026.

As in previous years, NSAC recommendations on TACs will be shared with the Boards for consideration as the Boards provide decisions and recommendations, as appropriate, on TAC

levels for 2026/27. DFO TAC recommendations to Boards will be consistent with how TAC recommendations in other management areas are calculated.

### ***Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)***

Since 2024, DFO, industry, and Landmark Fisheries (consultant) have collaborated through the MSE Working Group to develop an MSE tool for Northern shrimp management. MSE is a structured, transparent, and scientifically robust decision-support framework used to operationalize the Precautionary Approach (PA) in fisheries management in Canada and is recognized and utilized internationally. MSE uses simulations to test and compare management strategies under different scenarios, helping identify harvest level options that balance conservation, yield, and catch stability.

The Working Group (including Board staff) has defined management objectives and performance metrics to guide the development and assess the performance of the MSE. A broad range of candidate management procedures was tested across several operating model scenarios. A scientific peer review in December 2025 confirmed the MSE's consistency with the approved Northern Shrimp modeling framework, assessed deviations, and ensured the MSE functions as intended. The working group is assessing the performance of the candidate management procedures with the objective to present a narrowed selection of candidate management procedures (approaches) to NSAC for decision on implementation of one of these approaches for the future management of the NSAR and to use it to inform TAC recommendations for the 2026–27 fishing season. If NSAC selects a management procedure for the NSAR in March, the TAC recommendation would be generated using this management procedure using updated biomass indices and other stock variables. If supported by NSAC, the MSE output would be used in concert with the approach to distribute fishable biomass by Assessment Zone to make SFA level TAC recommendations. These TAC recommendations will be shared with the Boards for harvest level recommendations outside, and decisions within the Nunavut Settlement Area (NSA) and Nunavik Marine Region (NMR), recognizing that the Boards have a decision-making role for setting harvest levels in settlement areas.

The MSE is intended to serve as a long-term, precautionary tool for setting TACs annually. Pending discussions with NSAC in March, the first year of implementation (2026–27) may be an interim implementation, allowing for adjustments and refinements in the selection of management procedures for the future years. Once fully implemented, commitment from all is important to ensure catches do not exceed the MSE established output, which could invalidate the MSE projections. In this context, it is hoped that the Boards will also consider the MSE outputs as an important source of information when making their harvest level decisions and recommendations, alongside other relevant considerations, to support alignment with the precautionary objectives and assumptions underpinning the MSE framework.

### ***Electronic Video Monitoring***

The Electronic Video Monitoring (EVM) initiative originated as a proposal from the Canadian Association of Prawn Producers (CAPP) to address issues with the at-sea observer program

and create consistent processes at the dock. DFO and CAPP have worked collaboratively to develop a draft Northern Shrimp Monitoring Plan, which is targeted for limited implementation in the offshore fleet in April 2026.

Vessels that choose to adopt EVM will be required to maintain a minimum of 20% At-Sea Observer (ASO) coverage level for scientific sampling and compliance verification purposes. Vessels without EVM will continue to operate with 100% ASO coverage. Vessels fishing in the NSA and NMR are currently not eligible to participate in the EVM project, and would continue to require an ASO until such time as the co-management Boards make a decision on the use of EVM in these areas.

Vessels offloading in Greenland must also carry an ASO until appropriate processes are established with Greenland authorities.

The core objectives of the EVM Program are to 1) identify and quantify bycatch; 2) verify the relative composition of Northern shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*) and striped shrimp (*Pandalus montagui*); 3) audit reported catch.

The EVM protocol includes requirements and specifications, data review process and reporting requirements, an implementation plan, and program review schedule. A transition period will assess the EVM performance for participating vessels against established standards.

In addition to the introduction of EVM to its interested members, CAPP also proposed the introduction of a mandatory landings requirement consisting of two parts: 1) Dockside carton counting and sampling (DCS); and 2) Quota weight verification (QWV). These landings requirements are proposed as mandatory for all offshore Northern shrimp vessels offloading in Canadian ports and would be carried out by independent service providers. The objectives of this program are to establish a consistent, independent, and standardized approach, across regions, to verify and reconcile shrimp quota weights, by product form and package, including hail reporting, overpack determination, and alignment between declared and shore-based inspected weights. These changes will not be mandatory without agreement from all Northern shrimp vessels and are not expected to impact Inuit harvesting rights and privileges.

### ***Precautionary Approach (PA) Framework***

In the March 2025 stock assessment, DFO Science proposed an Upper Stock Reference (USR) point — the level that marks the boundary between healthy and cautious stock status — for *P. borealis* in the NSAR and SSAR and these were discussed at NSAC in March 2025. DFO Science recommended USR is 80% of a Bmsy-proxy (the stock size that gives the best sustainable catch) for the Northern shrimp stocks in both regions.

At the March 2025 NSAC meeting, participants expressed general support with the recommended levels, but no formal approval was given. DFO will seek confirmation from NSAC on January 20, in order to establish USRs, pending Board approval. Subsequently, DFO will seek a decision from the Boards on the NSAR USR at the next Board meeting, informed by NSAC views.

## **Next Steps**

1. DFO will seek NSAC views on the implementation of approaches developed by the Management Transition Working Group to align Northern shrimp management with the new stock assessment model, with a view to applying these approaches in TAC recommendations for the 2026–27 fishing season.
2. DFO will consult NSAC on the use of the MSE as a decision-support tool for recommending harvest levels and will present a narrowed set of candidate management procedures for consideration. NSAC views will be sought on the selection of a management procedure for application in the North Stock Assessment Region in March. Outcomes of NSAC discussions, including establishment of TACs by management area, MSE application, and proposed management procedures, will be brought forward to the Boards for their views and consideration in advance of harvest level decisions within the NSA and NMR, recognizing the Boards' full authority in settlement areas.
3. Pending NSAC support, DFO will proceed with limited implementation of the EVM program in the offshore fleet outside the NSA and NMR, consistent with the draft Northern Shrimp Monitoring Plan. Following initial implementation and assessment of alignment with objectives, DFO will engage formally with the Boards on the potential future use of EVM within the NSA and NMR.
4. DFO will seek NSAC confirmation of the proposed USR levels for Northern shrimp in January. Subject to NSAC views, DFO will subsequently bring the proposed NSAR USR to the Boards for consideration and decision, to support alignment of harvest decisions with the Precautionary Approach.

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**Date:** January 10, 2026

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1** – Map of shrimp administrative areas in Atlantic Canada

**Appendix 1**

**Map:** Yellow – North Stock Assessment Region; Red – South Stock Assessment Region

