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DHALI WAL ANNOUNCES MODEST INCREASE IN NORTHERN SHRIMP QUOTA

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OTTAWA -- The Honourable Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, today announced the new three year management plan (2000-2002) for the Northern Shrimp fishery. This plan will replace the existing three year plan which expired in 1999, and is highlighted by an 8,000t increase in Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for 2000 which will enable additional temporary access to the fishery.

The overall TAC for 2000 will be increased to 110,052 tonnes (t) from 102,052t in 1999. The TAC for Shrimp Fishery Area (SFA) 6 will be increased by 3,000t to 61,632t in 2000, while the TAC in the remainder of the SFAs will maintain their 1999 quotas. Additional fishing opportunities will be available in Division 3L, in accordance with the decision of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to establish a quota of 6,000t, 5,000t of which is for Canadian fishers and 1000t for other NAFO members outside of 200 miles. The quotas respond to advice from the Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee (NSAC).

"The northern shrimp biomass has been very high and stable over the past several years and the fishery continues to be an abundant and lucrative one for Atlantic Canadians," Mr. Dhaliwal said. "However, while the scientific evidence allows for a small increase in quotas, current environmental conditions, such as warming water temperatures, could lead to decline in abundance in the future. Therefore, we are taking a cautious approach by modestly increasing the quota. We will be reviewing harvest levels each year to ensure the sustainability of the resource for future generations."

The scientific assessment for 2000 indicates that the stock in SFA 6 continues to be healthy and abundant with good recruitment prospects; thus permitting a modest increase in this area. In the remaining areas, the indices are generally favourable but future prospects are uncertain; accordingly, there will be no change in quota levels for the 2000 season.

Since 1996, the abundance of northern shrimp and the value of the fishery have more than doubled. TAC's have increased from 37,600t in 1996 to current levels in excess of 100,000t, enabling the addition of inshore fishers in Newfoundland and Quebec and expanded opportunity to benefit from the wealth of this abundant resource. In 1999, these fishers and the coastal communities in which they live shared in the total landed value of the fishery of \$280 million.

"We have received 17 requests from all Atlantic provinces and Quebec for access to the northern shrimp fishery," Mr. Dhaliwal said. "Dividing the benefits of a valuable resource among competing interests is always controversial. I am satisfied that this is a fair and

reasonable distribution of a Canadian resource to all Canadian fishermen."

Consistent with NAFO, a 5,000t quota will be available to Canada within NAFO Division 3L. The Minister has decided that it will be allocated as follows: 2,500t will be fished by existing inshore licence holders and 1,000t will go to offshore participants in the northern shrimp fishery. The remaining 1,500t will be provided to a consortium of PEI fishers and processors as a temporary northern shrimp allocation.

PEI is the only Atlantic province without access to the northern shrimp fishery. An allocation of 1,500t will allow the PEI fishing industry to have access to this resource and to harvest northern shrimp, for the first time ever, since the opening of this fishery in 1978. The allocation of 1,500t to a consortium of PEI fishers and processors will provide funds for professionalization of fishers to build their capacity to take on a larger role for the management of their fisheries. It will also provide funding to augment shellfish research, which will benefit all Atlantic Canada and Quebec. In addition, this allocation will make funds available to processors to aid in market development and promotion of PEI seafood products.

"Over the past 20 years, fishermen in all of the Atlantic provinces except PEI have enjoyed the benefits of this very lucrative fishery," Mr. Dhaliwal said. "This year, for the first time since the opening of this fishery, PEI fishermen will also be able to enjoy some of these benefits. Given that 20,000t of last year's total quota was not harvested, providing temporary access to this resource to new entrants while abundance is high makes sense."

With respect to SFA 6, principles adopted in the last three year plan for allocation of temporary access to quota increases will again be applied in 2000. Of the 3,000t increase in SFA 6, temporary allocation of 1,500t will be provided to the Innu Nation of Labrador, a temporary allocation of 1,000t will be provided to Fogo Island Co-op and a temporary 500t allocation will be provided to adjacent inshore licence holders. Therefore, all of the increase in SFA 6 is provided to adjacent fishermen or fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador. The 1,500t allocation to the Innu Nation responds to their long-standing request, which is supported by NSAC, for increased access to northern shrimp. Currently, the Innu receive only 510t of the overall TAC.

As a result of the allocation of this 8,000t increase in 2000, Newfoundland will maintain the 70% share of the harvest they received in 1999.

In accordance with the principles developed in consultation with industry in 1997, access to the increased quota will be provided on a temporary basis. This ensures that there will be no permanent increase in harvesting capacity. Should there be a need to lower quota levels in the future, the removal of access privileges will be based on the "last in, first out" principle, as is the case in all fisheries. Since 1997, all new access has been provided on a temporary basis.

As recommended by NSAC, allocations that are not caught will be reallocated only with the

agreement of the fleet involved. However, should large quantities of allocated quotas remain uncaught, a meeting of NSAC may be convened in the fall to discuss reallocation. In 1999, about 20,000t of quota were left in the water, including about 7,000t of quota assigned to temporary entrants in SFA 6.