

Who will be left fishing a generation from now?

Recent research carried out by the Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries (SRSF) Project based at St. Francis Xavier University highlights a serious issue now facing the region's small boat fisheries.

This issue is best described as the dilemma of recruitment. Atlantic Canada's small boat fisheries are now, and always have been, a family-centered livelihood. Today, however, fewer and fewer fishing families are encouraging their children to take up fishing. This is occurring despite the fact that Nova Scotia's fisheries continue to be the province's No. 1 export industry, generating more than a billion dollars annually.

Why then are so few young people being recruited into the province's small boat fishing industry?

Government policy appears to be the single most important cause of the current recruitment dilemma. Over a period of several decades now policy makers have either ignored or attempted to undermine the

community- and family-centered basis of the small boat fisheries.

SRSF research demonstrates that the vast majority of today's small boat fish harvesters were born into and raised within families and communities that are defined by their history and involvement with fishing. Most had their first fishing experiences and learned how to fish from family members.

Their fathers, grandfathers and other male ancestors came to fishing in precisely the same way. A survey of all Richmond and Guysborough County lobster license holders reveals that almost 85 per cent have fathers who fished, and almost 80 per cent report having father's fathers who fished for their living.

Almost one in every two report that their mother's fathers, their wives' fathers, their fathers' brothers, and at least one of their brothers fish or fished for a living. Similarly, a recent survey of lobster license holders in Antigonish, Inverness, and Pictou Counties found that more than

75 per cent of the participants had fathers who fished for a living.

Almost 60 per cent reported that one or both grandfathers fished, 65 per cent had at least one uncle who fished, and over one in every two had at least one brother who fishes for a living. There is little doubt that similar social patterns prevail in the small boat fisheries throughout Atlantic Canada.

Recent studies show, however, that the vast majority of fishermen are extremely reluctant to advise their children to fish for a living under any circumstances other than one in which children would enter the small boat fisheries already in possession of a boat, equipment and all of the important fishing licences.

This reluctance occurs in spite of the fact that the vast majority of those questioned also report a deep personal satisfaction with fishing as a way of life and state that, if they had their life to live over again, they would once again choose fishing for their livelihood.

Fishermen choose not to encourage their children to fish simply because of the economic realities of today's fisheries. New recruits would find it impossible to make a viable living if saddled from the outset with the crippling debt loads associated with increasingly expensive boats and licences. Thus, in both studies cited above, it was found that well under 30 per cent of the surveyed fishermen had sons in the fisheries. In fact, Richmond and Guysborough County fishermen reported that they had notably more wives (35.9 per cent) than sons (28 per cent) currently fishing. The number of sons involved in fishing in Antigonish, Inverness and Pictou Counties was slightly lower, at 26.8 per cent, than in Richmond and Guysborough Counties.

With an average age of around fifty years, most current small boat fishing captains have 15 or 20 years left before retirement and the 'freeing' of their licences for new entrants.

This length of waiting time

will further discourage many sons and daughters from taking up small boat fishing. As one Guysborough County fisherman insisted: "The government keeps the young people out of the fishery. There are not enough resources to make a go of it. My licences and boat are my retirement package and if I were to give them to my son or daughter then they would have to support me because I would not be able to survive on a government pension."

SRSF research indicates that fishing families and fishing communities are becoming seriously limited, if not fatally disabled, in their capacity to recruit and to prepare new entrants. What does this say about the viability, vitality and sustainability of the region's small boat fisheries and the coastal communities in which they are based? Who will be left fishing a generation from now?

It is not too late to rewrite fisheries policy and regulations so as to support, rather than undermine, Nova Scotia's small boat fisheries and

coastal communities.

Federal policy makers should study the initiatives taken elsewhere, in Norway for instance, where a portion of groundfish quotas are set aside exclusively for the use of new entrants. In both Norway and Japan legislation has been created specifically to strengthen the role of local associations in fisheries management and policy development.

Many fishing nations have also developed extensive fisheries-focused education and research institutions, thus stimulating the economy of fishing regions, elevating the social status of fisheries-related livelihoods and simultaneously improving base of existing 'scientific' knowledge.

None of these progressive measures are likely to be implemented in Canada, however, until government policy makers drop their obsession with the idea that fisheries management should revolve entirely around the problem of "too many fishermen chasing too few fish."

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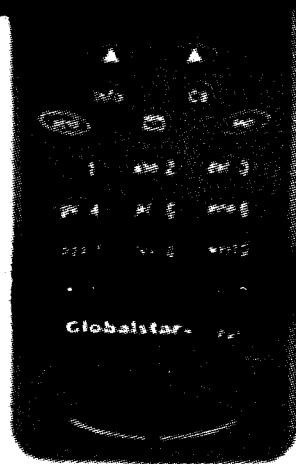
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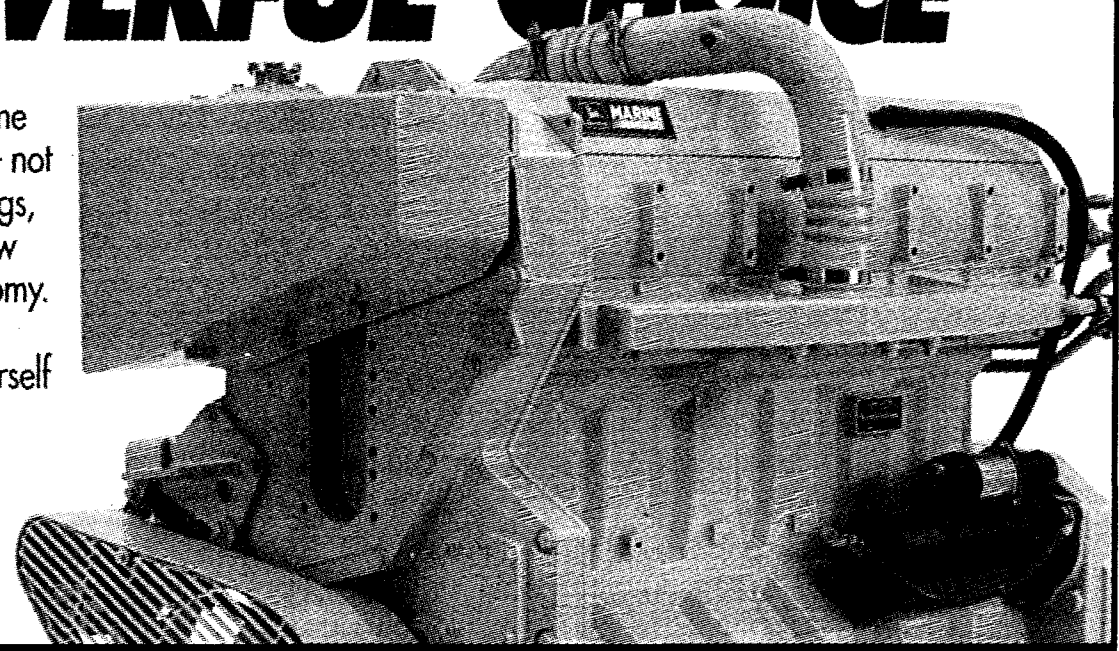
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crab fishery. The lobster fishery had 300 violations.

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Who will be left fishing?

As will be discussed in next month's *Atlantic Fisherman*, the collapse of groundfish stocks in the early '90s was, arguably, brought about by government attempts to concentrate the fishery in the hands of a few large corporate interests, at the expense of the individuals, families and coastal communities engaged in small boat fisheries.

This essay has been prepared with contributions from: Anthony Davis, SRSF Director, John Wagner, SRSF Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Christie Dyer and Jessica Paterson, SRSF Project Officers and DFO Science Horizons Interns, SRSF Community Research Co-ordinators - Virginia Boudreau (the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association), Kerry Prosper, Mi'kmaq Fish and Wildlife Commission/Afton First Nation, Kaye Wallace (the Gulf Nova Scotia Bonafide Fishermen's Association), and Patricia Rhynold, Manager, the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association. SRSF is supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) program.

self-polishing technology with copper or zinc as chemically bound main biocides available in a variety of products. Only a few co-biocides are used in TBT-free SPC's:

- Zinc pyrithione
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Interlux Intersmooth Ecoloflex SPC is a TBT-free SPC antifouling based on self-polishing, copper acrylate polymer technology, which reacts with seawater similarly to TBT-SPC copolymers.

On immersion, Intersmooth Ecoloflex SPC antifouling reacts with the sodium ions in seawater to produce a soluble layer on the surface of the coating.

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Copper oxide and a non-persistent degradable "boosting biocide" (zinc pyrithione) are physically dispersed in the polymer solution, to provide the biocidal activity of the paint.

The release of TBT-free biocides is sustained throughout the coating's lifetime by chemical control of the leached layer size and composition.

Once the biocides have sloughed off the paint surface, the copper oxide quickly detoxifies and the "boosting biocide" degrades in the presence of light and/or bacteria into substances with very low toxicity and environmental persistence.

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