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## Greenpeace, Regan disagree Moratorium not needed, says fisheries minister

By GREG MacVICAR

Federal Fisheries Minister Geoff Regan isn't biting on a request for the Canadian government to call for a moratorium on bottom trawling in international waters.

"We think that no gear type is inherently destructive," Mr. Regan said Monday afternoon at a Halifax news conference called in response to one held earlier in the day by Greenpeace and the Ecology Action Centre.

Greenpeace is asking for a temporary moratorium on trawling in international waters to allow time to research its impact on ocean life.

Mr. Regan won't be supporting the campaign.

"We think the important thing here is to identify sensitive areas," the minister said. "I announced recently \$20 million to be invested in our work around the Grand Banks and \$11 million of that is on science."

Mr. Regan said that investment could involve identifying sensitive areas in international waters over the head and tail of the Grand Banks.

Greenpeace said that's not good enough.

The environmental organization's 72-metre ship Esperanza is docked in Halifax and will be heading for the northwest Atlantic today to monitor and record trawling in international waters.



*ERIC WYNNE/Staff*

Seated in front of the Greenpeace vessel MV Esperanza, Dalhousie biology professor Martin Willison, left, Greenpeace Canada executive director Bruce Cox, Greenpeace International Oceans Campaigner Bunny McDiarmid and Mark Butler from the Ecology Action Centre address the media behind the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Greenpeace is urging the Canadian government to spearhead a temporary moratorium on trawling the ocean floors while scientists have time to study the effects of the fishing practice.

"The fishermen are actually getting there before scientists," said Bunny McDiarmid, Greenpeace's international co-ordinator for its latest campaign.

Bruce Cox, Greenpeace Canada's executive director, said the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, which sets quotas in international waters, doesn't work.

"It has failed miserably," said Mr. Cox. "The most famous case being the collapse of the northern cod stocks. NAFO is bound by red tape. It turns a blind eye frequently to infractions of its own rules."

Mr. Regan agreed that the organization, formed in 1979, needs a tune-up.

"Canada believes very strongly that we do need reform of NAFO and we are working toward that," he said.

"Making sure NAFO makes decisions on the basis of science - that's very important, we've taken measures domestically like protection of new protected areas like the Gully, for example, and don't permit certain kinds of fishing activities.

"We think the important thing here is to identify the habitats that are the most sensitive and protect those areas. We're working towards that both domestically and internationally."

Martin Willison, a conservation biology professor at Dalhousie University and one of 1,136 scientists worldwide that Greenpeace says supports its latest initiative, said sensitive areas such as sea mounts are already being damaged by deepsea trawling.

"It's like an old-growth forest in the ocean," said Mr. Willison. "It takes a long, long time for life to grow there. This fishing on sea mounts is simply a tragedy - there's no other word to describe it."

Ulf Snarby, a shrimp fisherman who lives in Liverpool and fishes out of North Sydney, had one word to describe Greenpeace members.

"They are zealots," said Mr. Snarby, a partner in MV Osprey Ltd., which harvests and processes more than 10,000 tonnes of shrimp annually in both domestic and international waters, using two freezer trawlers.

"To suggest that we're out there tearing down all the coral reefs or whatever that growth is on the bottom is just pure foolishness," he said.

"The bottom impact is extremely minimal because we want it that way. We don't want

it to go heavy on the bottom."

He said shrimp fishermen avoid coral because it's destructive.

"We have fishing gear that is hanging behind us that is worth about \$500,000."

Josephine Kennedy, spokeswoman for a group of temporary snow crab fishermen from Cape Breton, said her group isn't against trawling per se.

"It depends on just what procedure they're using," she said. "Sometimes they're using too small of a mesh out there, which is harming the fish stocks."

David Tate, president of fishing gear company Nordsea Ltd. of Dartmouth, said Canada's fishing industry has been proactive in making selective trawls.

"This part is very often overlooked by Greenpeace and people like them," he said. "The Canadian shrimp fishery is now one of the cleanest in the world - there's a grid inserted in the trawl that lets the shrimp through and channels untargeted species up through a hole and escapes."

But Mr. Snarby said the majority of trawlers fishing in international waters off the Canadian coast aren't from Canada but from Russia and the Baltic states.

Ms. McDiarmid wouldn't speculate on what the Esperanza might encounter between today and Aug. 11, when the vessel is expected to return to Halifax.

"There's nine countries that are taking the majority of the catch out there," she said. "We have to find these boats."

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