



The Honourable Joanne Thompson, M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

June 4, 2026

The Honourable Julie Dabrusin, M.P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

The Honourable Nathalie Provost, M.P.
Secretary of State (Nature)
15 Eddy Street, Gatineau, QC, J8X 4B3

Re: Recommendations for advancing action on marine conservation in Atlantic Canada

Dear Minister Thompson, Minister Dabrusin, and Secretary of State Provost,

We write as civil society organizations, which work collaboratively with Indigenous groups, governments, industry, and coastal communities to support Canada in reaching its commitments to protect the marine environment in Atlantic Canada (Waponahkik). While we are pleased that Canada's "A Force of Nature" has been released, **we are highly concerned that efforts in Atlantic Canada have stalled** as a result of provincial government opposition and that opportunities to leverage federal commitments to support industrial development are not being taken to support conservation.

You will recall a number of letters sent over the past year, urging action on finalizing the *Fundian Channel-Browns Bank Marine Protected Area* and releasing the *Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Bioregion* ("Network Plan"). **Despite these appeals and broad support from constituents across the provinces, there has been no advancement in**

this region. At the same time, the government has announced numerous economically driven projects in Atlantic Canadian waters, yet **no efforts have been made to keep pace with conservation initiatives.**

There are a number of urgent steps that the federal government can take to demonstrate that it is serious about advancing marine protection:

1. **Leverage federal commitments to industrial projects to support marine conservation in Atlantic Canada.** Economic development opportunities (i.e. offshore energy projects, small craft harbours, etc.) must be coupled with provincial collaboration on meeting national nature protection commitments.
2. **Release the *Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Bioregion* as a matter of priority, for World Ocean Day on June 8, 2026,** given that significant time, public funds, and public engagement have already been invested. We support interim measures proposed by the Department of Fisheries staff, including to designate Marine Conservation Research Sites (MCRS) in the Bay of Fundy to advance monitoring efforts.
3. **Designate the Fundian Channel-Browns Bank Marine Protected Area** as finalized in 2024 after immense efforts by the Mi'kmaq, fishing industry, scientists, policy makers, and civil society. Operationalizing the plan will provide clarity and honour the work of all involved.
4. **Begin implementation of all Tier 1 sites¹ in the *Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Bioregion* by 2030** to achieve the goals laid out in “A Force of Nature” and honour decades of work by scientists, government employees, Indigenous Nations, the fishing industry, coastal communities, and civil society, as well as significant investment of public funds.
5. **Continue moving marine conservation initiatives forward in Newfoundland and Labrador, including on the South Coast and in the Southeast Avalon region.** There is a great deal of public support for these areas and decades of coordinated efforts, including with Miawpukek and Qalipu First Nations, and the Town of Burgeo.

¹ Tier 1 sites as of April 2024, include: Cobequid Bay, Southern Bight, Chignecto Bay, Bay of Fundy Horse Mussel Aggregations, West Isles and Passages, Long Eddy, South Grand Manan, Chebogue, Pemsik, LaHave Islands, Sambro Ledges-Prospect, St. Mary's (Napu'saqnuq) River and Estuary, Canso Ledges-Sugar Harbour Islands, Bird Islands, Bras d'Or Lake, Western Jordan Basin, Central Scotian Slope, Rise, and Abyss (Source: [Marine conservation network sites for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Bioregion](#)).

To ensure that there is planning and funding support for “A Force of Nature” initiatives in Atlantic Canada going forward, we recommend the federal government:

1. **Prioritize and fund development of evidence-based marine spatial plans** to create investment certainty in the offshore region and ensure that the demands placed on Atlantic Canada's ocean estate are balanced. Marine spatial plans would ensure that the frameworks developed under the previous government are operationalized.
2. **Issue and announce funding through the [Oceans Management Contribution Program](#).** Re-issuing this funding is critical to sustain important momentum toward 30x30, particularly to support Indigenous-led conservation efforts. Without core funding through this Contribution Program, organizations are now forced to lay off staff.

Atlantic Canadian provinces have plans to renew or grow oil and gas exploration and development, aquaculture, and offshore renewable energy with a view to create economic security in the region. **Conservation is also proven to provide short- and long-term economic benefits** while minimizing negative economic impacts, as most protected areas continue to permit low impact fishing activity.

The benefits of marine conservation, including rebuilding depleted fish populations, carbon sequestration, and contributions to economic livelihoods, will provide significant additional value to Atlantic Canadians. Other benefits include greater climate resilience (e.g. less storm damage or lower insurance premiums). Finally, a well-managed, healthy ocean provides countless cultural, health, and recreational benefits. **The history, economic security, and appeal of Atlantic Canada is deeply tied to the ocean.**

It is important to note that **protected areas are critical to meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples** as these areas are designed such that Indigenous communities can continue to practice their traditional ways of life, pass knowledge to future generations, and uphold their rights and responsibilities to care for future generations of all beings.

In the face of geopolitical stressors, and a need for economic independence, we must ensure that Canada accounts for the immense benefits of a healthy ocean. As stated by the Prime Minister: “When we fail to protect nature, we are not making a sound economic choice. We are making a choice that works against us.”

While announcing “A Force of Nature,” Prime Minister Carney repeatedly articulated the importance of a healthy environment to Canadians and Canada's national identity, and reaffirmed Canada's commitment to the international targets of 30x30. **Atlantic Canada must**

play a role in meeting these targets. Beyond the parity of each bioregion doing their part to ensure a healthy ocean for *all* Canadians, this will ensure that Atlantic Canada's ocean will be resilient to the increasing threats it faces.

We welcome an opportunity to discuss further and to collaborate where helpful to ensure Atlantic Canada is not left behind with so much at stake.

Respectfully,

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