



Scotia-Fundy Region's

# Southwestern New Brunswick Fisheries Management Area

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**T**he fishery on New Brunswick's Fundy shore is in many ways one of the most interesting.

The tides are enormous and are a factor that must be taken into account by fishermen navigating around dangerous shoals. And most of the activity occurs in that triangular southern tip of New Brunswick which includes three of Canada's remarkable islands—Grand Manan, Deer Island and Campobello, known as the "Fundy Isles."

Canada's sardine industry is concentrated in this area, and indeed the history, lore and present-day image of the fishery in the area is largely dominated by herring, sometimes referred to as the "silver harvest."

Indeed, the aspect of the Southwestern New Brunswick fishery that is most likely to pique the curiosity of a stranger is the

herring weirs. Beaten, weathered and hung with random bunches of seaweed they look like corrals of scraggly sticks stuck in the bottom: a primitive form of entrapment out of place in the modern world. But in fact they are no such thing. They are expensive, effective and sometimes even high-tech

ways of catching fish, although they derive from ancient ways. The catching technique is simple enough: herring follow a lead net at high tide and enter the circular enclosure from where they are scooped out at low tide. But the weirs are being built in ever-deeper water, which requires ever-more advanced techniques to drive immense poles into the bottom, to secure the nets

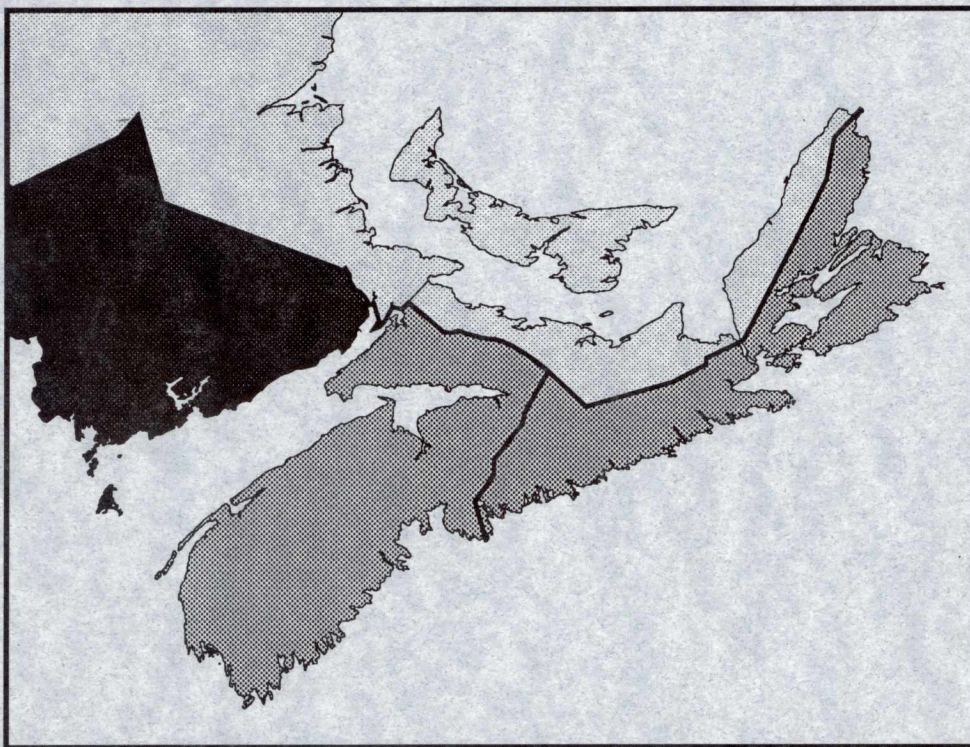
nearly a kilometre long and as as much as 100 metres deep. A school of herring is surrounded, the bottom of the net is drawn together or "pursed" and the herring is pulled aboard.

Lobster is caught in spring and fall seasons. Much of the catch is held in huge tidal pounds built along tideways between islands on Grand Manan. Scallops are also

an increasingly important species. Fishermen used to turn to them primarily as a winter alternative when other fisheries were slack or closed, but now scallop fishing is a year round activity, with some 135 active vessels. Groundfish in the form of cod and pollock are the next most important fisheries. A clam fishery grew to become important in the 1980s, but clam flats have since been closed because of pollution.

Meanwhile there's that completely different

thing, dulse, which is harvested almost uniquely in the world on Grand Manan Island—picked during the lowest range of tides at the foot of cliffs on the uninhabited north side of the island. Maritimers themselves may have come to think of it as an old fashioned food, but it fetches good



*The Scotia-Fundy Region highlighting the Southwestern New Brunswick Area.*

that go over them, and so forth.

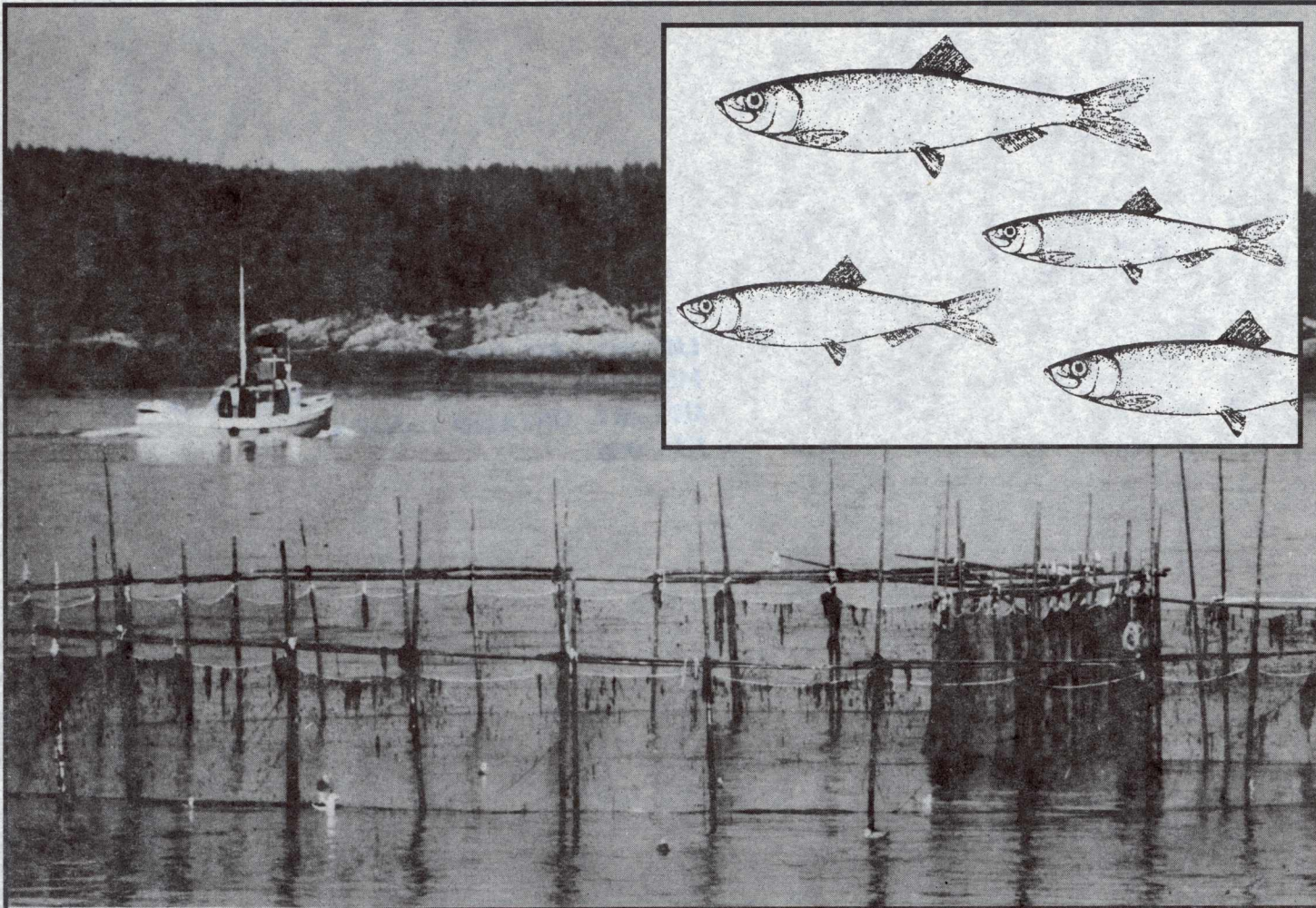
Much of the herring—which in recent years has alternated with lobster as the most valuable species of the ocean fishery—is caught by 23 purse seiners sailing mostly out of Grand Manan and Campobello islands. The seines may be



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*Weirs built along the Fundy coast and in estuaries, although they appear to be very primitive, are actually expensive, effective, and sometimes high-tech ways of catching fish. Herring (inset), sometimes referred to as the "silver harvest, dominates this area's fishery.*

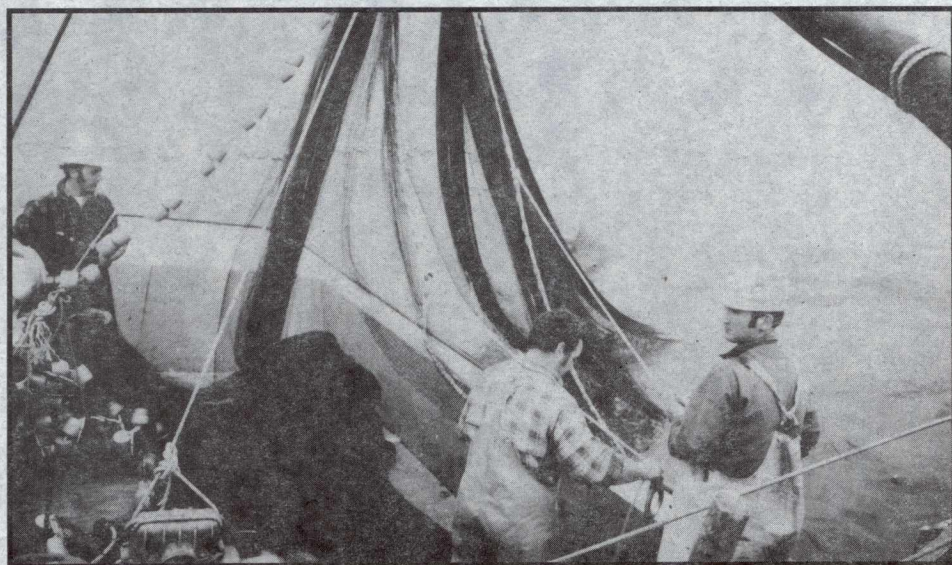
prices in California and Japan as a condiment and health food.

Although most of the fishing activity is in the southwest westward of Saint John, there is in fact a fishery farther up the Bay of Fundy. A few places, like Alma, tucked in next to Fundy National Park, are ports for fishermen who fish amid the powerful and enormous tides of the upper Bay of Fundy—places where the harbour may be high and dry at low tide. They catch mostly lobster, herring, scallops and some groundfish.

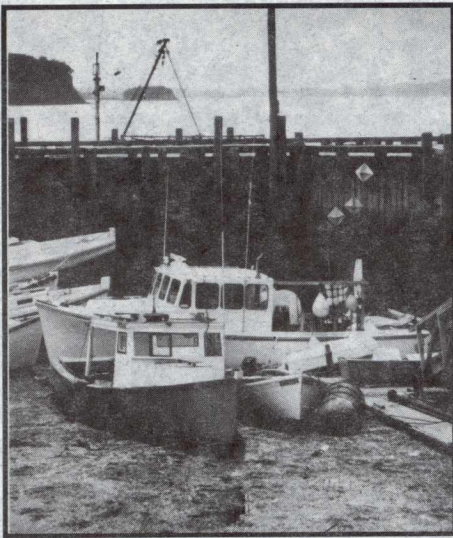
The entire southwestern New Brunswick area has some 1,600 licensed fishermen and about 55 processing plants—most of which are related to herring. Some are large sardine packing plants, such as the well-known one at Black's Harbour, but many are herring smoke-houses, especially on Grand Manan where the old-fashioned shingled sheds around the wharves give these areas a somewhat folkloric look. These sheds have not changed since the

1880s when Grand Manan experienced an economic boom based on the export of smoked herring, primarily to the West

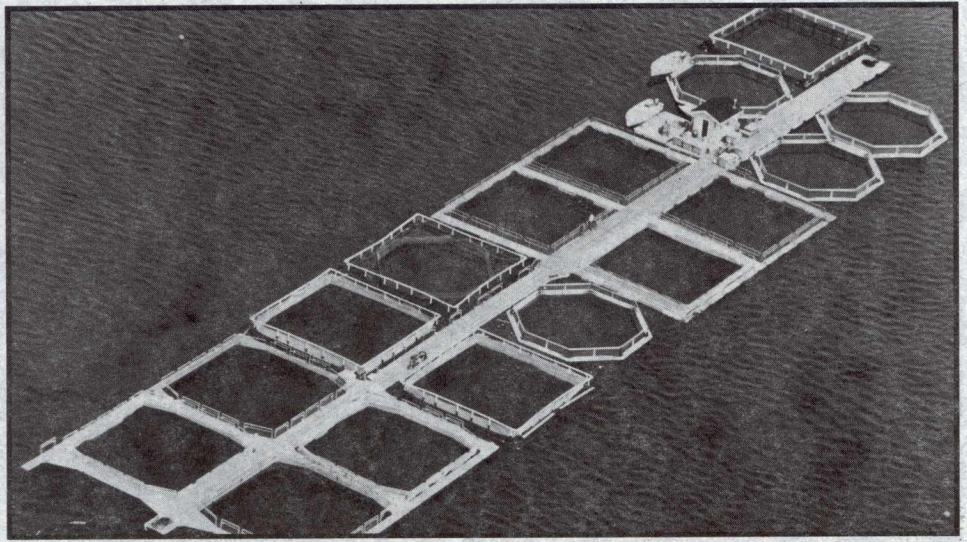
Indies and secondarily to the U.S. Although some aspects of the process have become mechanized, it's mostly done as it



*Large purse seiners, which have been used to catch much of the herring in recent years, sail mostly out of Grand Manan and Campobello islands.*



*The enormous high tides are an important factor for the fishermen along the New Brunswick shore of the Bay of Fundy.*



*Aquaculture in Southwestern New Brunswick has emerged as one of the more impressive economic success stories in Atlantic Canada in recent times, surpassing even the landed value of the wild fishery.*

was a century ago—with great skill and care. There are also some plants that process groundfish and other products.

All this, however is only one aspect of the fishery in Southwestern New Brunswick—what is increasingly called the “wild” fishery to distinguish it from farmed Atlantic salmon. The inlets of the coast, protected from the coldest north winds and with water flushed out regularly, is warm enough in winter to allow salmon to overwinter with less risk of freezing than in other parts of the Maritimes. Salmon farming has grown quickly. It started only around 1980 with a few demonstration farms run by DFO and

in recent years has been estimated to be worth nearly \$60 million in sales—about double the landed value of the wild fishery. The wild fishery, however, provides most of the employment and the processed value it generates has reached nearly \$100 million.

Industries are being created as spinoffs of the several dozen salmon farms as well. Some manufacture of fish feed (using herring from the wild fishery), cages and other necessities.

The recreational fishery for salmon is also important, especially along the Saint John River, which is stocked, along with some other rivers, from DFO hatcheries.

Salmon has become an important tool for economic development for Indian bands along the Saint John River. The Kingsclear Band has transformed its traditional native food fishery into an angling fishery while the St. Mary’s Band has become active in salmon farming.

The development of salmon aquaculture has been greatly spurred on by scientific research done at the St. Andrews Biological Station of DFO, where advanced work on the domestication of other species is also being done—halibut, bay scallops and others. Scientists at the Station also assess fish stocks, check for marine toxins and do other scientific work as well.

In addition, DFO managers and personnel in Southwestern New Brunswick have a particular involvement in habitat protection and restoration. They have a particular concern to restore the clam flats which have become threatened with pollution, and to protect salmon habitat.



*In recent years, lobsters have alternated with herring as the most valuable species of the ocean fishery. Much of the catch is held in huge tidal pounds built along tideways.*

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# Southwestern New Brunswick Area Key Statistics

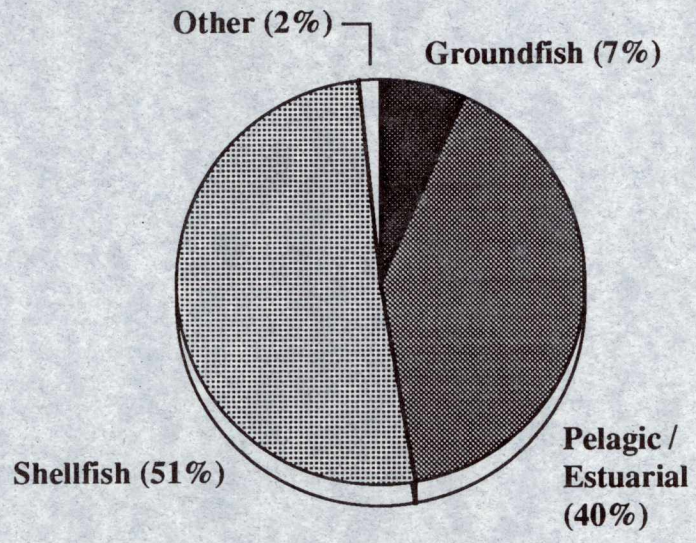
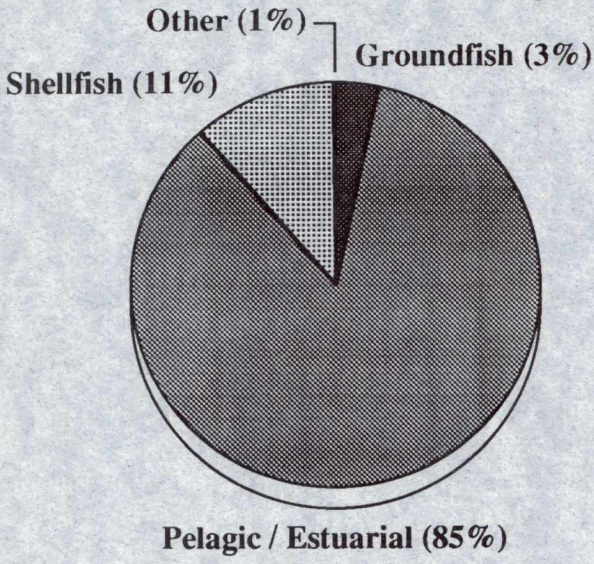
*Statistics obtained from the 1990/91 Scotia-Fundy Region Overview*

**Geographic Boundry** - Part of the Scotia-Fundy Region, this management area extends from the Nova-Scotia / New Brunswick border southward along the coast of the Bay of Fundy to the Canada / United States border. It also includes all inland waters flowing into the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick.

<b>Licensed Fishermen</b>	1,478 (678 part-time; 800 full-time)
<b>Federally Registered Processing Plants</b>	56 (aquaculture included)
<b>Fish Plant Workers</b>	2,489 (Normal level; figures are higher during seasonal peak)
<b>Fishing Vessels</b>	346 (01 - 34 feet)
	319 (35 - 44 feet)
	66 (45 - 64 feet)
	12 (65 - 100 feet)
	2 (100 feet and greater)
<b>Most important species by value</b>	Herring \$ 9,031,000
	Scallops \$ 7,431,000
	Lobster \$ 5,718,000
	Cod \$ 997,000
	Clam \$ 688,000
<b>Aquaculture production</b>	4,500 tonnes valued at over \$50,000,000

**Quantity of Fish Landed**  
(71,900 Tonnes)

**Value of Fish Landed**  
(\$27.3 Million)



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