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NEWS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

MFU Calls on Governments and Fisheries Organizations to consider fishery sustainability

Shediac (New Brunswick), September 30th, 2019 – The Maritime Fishermen's Union is calling on the Government of Canada and fisheries organizations, including First Nations Communities to come together to discuss the impacts of unregulated commercial fisheries in the region on lobster conservation and sustainability in a collegial and transparent process. This includes renewing its call for government to implement a complete ban on lobster fishing during the lobster's reproductive period – the most important period in the lifecycle of a lobster.

“We fully support the rights of our first nations communities to have access to the region's lobster fishery as part of their Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) fishery needs,” says MFU Executive Director Martin Mallet. “However, recent announcements about plans to commercialize that fishery, creates grave concerns over the long-term sustainability of the lobster resource for all stakeholders.”

Members of a Mi'kmaq First Nation recently announced their plan to, for the first time, sell lobster that they catch during their fall FSC fishery, despite not having the federal government's approval. The MFU states that First Nations in eastern Canada already have commercial access to fisheries and other natural resources as a result of the 1999 Marshall decision and would like to remind the Government of Canada of its responsibility towards resource conservation and sustainability before the issuance of any rights based or commercial fisheries.

Mallet wants to remind fishermen that it's not their responsibility, or the responsibility of any fishing organization to police unregulated or unlicensed fishing activity in our region – that's a matter for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the RCMP. He would also like to remind processing plants and the general public that it is illegal in Atlantic Canada to buy FSC Fishery sourced product.

“The MFU is committed to ensuring that lobster stocks remain sustainable for our commercial fisheries and coastal communities, including First Nations communities, that depend on this resource”, says Mallet.

It is important to mention that the current health of the lobster resource is due to sustainability measures that have been put in place such as fishing seasons, limited number of commercial licenses, trap limits, escape mechanisms for undersized lobsters and the release of female lobsters bearing eggs

or of optimum breeding size, and more recently the minimum size increase to 77mm and higher in most areas of the sGSL, which has been hugely beneficial to lobster reproduction and sustainability.

“The MFU is ready and willing to provide educational resources to help all fisheries create the awareness we need with regards to this issue to ensure long-term sustainability of the resources”, says Mallet.

Founded in 1977, the MFU represents over 1300 fishermen, making it one of the largest and leading fish harvester association in Atlantic Canada. Homarus Inc. is a non-profit research and development organization created by the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU) in 2001, whose mission is to develop tools to ensure the sustainability of the lobster resource and its fishery.

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