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**Sent by email**

Date: 12/09/2018

**Subject: Request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement v2.0 FCR-7.9.1 for AQIP Gulf of St Lawrence Greenland halibut and Atlantic halibut fixed gear fishery**

Dear Louise Allan,

I write with reference to your submission on 13/08/2018 of a request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement (CR) to allow:

The Principle 1 assessor to attend the site visit remotely, with the other 2 team members attending onsite.

As you are aware, the CR procedures relating to v2.0 FCR-7.9.1 state:

7.9.1 The team shall carry out the on-site assessment as planned. The team shall:

7.9.1.1 Conduct stakeholder interviews to make sure that the team is aware of any concerns or information that stakeholders may have: a. The team shall allow private interviews with the team for stakeholders who request one; b. The team shall use any information provided in private in conformity with the confidentiality requirements in 4.4; c. If stakeholders do not wish or are not able to be interviewed, the team shall inform them that they may send written information to the team

These are integral to ensuring all MSC accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies operate in a consistent and transparent manner. The MSC intends that these requirements be met across all fisheries and CoC certificate holders, except in exceptional, well-justified circumstances, as part of the MSC programme.

**MSC notes the factors presented supporting your request, including:**

- The P1 assessor is also the P1 assessor for an overlapping fishery assessment (Canada OAB 2+3KLMNO Greenland Halibut Bottom Trawl and Gillnet) which will aid in harmonisation efforts.
- The rest of the Assessment Team will attend the site visit as planned;
- Relevant material to inform P1 Assessment can be accessed off-site;
- The P1 Assessor will be available remotely during the site visit to answer any relevant questions. Additionally they will be available to respond to any questions following the site visit;

**Given the rationale provided, the MSC is willing to grant a variation to the CR in this case subject to the following conditions:**

- CABs make clear that the absent members of the team are available to meet with stakeholders by virtual or other means, including at mutually convenient physical locations where it is shown that this would be necessary to effectively communicate key issues.
- CAB has a contingency plan in place in the event that the relevant information is not accessible remotely i.e. if during the audit it becomes apparent that some information cannot be accessed by the remote P1 assessor, there is a back-up plan to address this.



If you have any questions regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Fisheries Assessment Manager for this fishery.

Marine Stewardship Council  
cc: Accreditation Services International