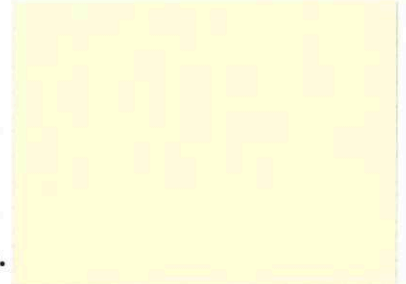
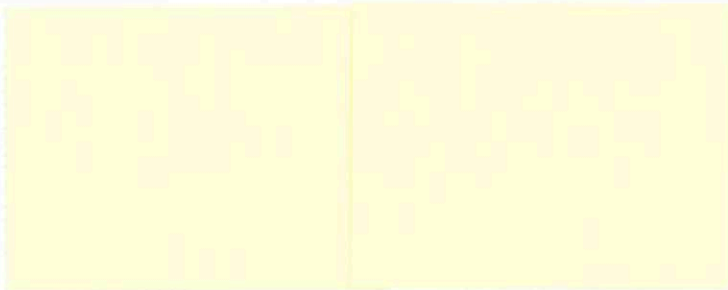




February 13, 2024



Re: 2024 Elver Fishery – Contemplated Non-Renewal of Licence No.

I am writing to inform you of my intention not to renew any elver licences for the 2024 season, including the licence referred to above. My intention is based on the following reasons.

Over the last several years, multiple discussions between the Department, licence holders, and others have noted that new tools and approaches are required to effectively manage and control the elver fishery. In the absence of these changes, it is highly likely that a 2024 season would follow the unacceptable pattern seen in recent years.

As you know, over the last four fishing seasons, the elver fishery has undergone a pattern of increasing and very serious challenges. Inspections, observations, and reports to Conservation and Protection (C&P) indicate significant quantities of elvers being fished illegally, with total removals estimated to have been significantly in excess of the total allowable catch, jeopardizing the conservation objectives for American eel in Canada and threatening the conservation and protection of the population.

This fishery brings with it significant enforcement challenges, stemming from the large geographic area of the fishery, ease of harvest with minimal equipment, with harvesting carried out at night, and throughout a significant number of highly distributed set of river systems. It has become clear that significant changes to the regulation and management of the fishery would be required to address these challenges and have a fishery that is capable of being properly managed and controlled.

The elver fishery has become the focus of harassment, threats, and violence between fishers and toward fishery officers, with a number of confrontations and incidents of violence creating an immediate threat to public safety and management of the elver fishery. C&P, and its enforcement partners, has received numerous complaints of violence, trespassing, property damage, weapons offences, organized crime, forcible confinement, and other significant risks to public safety.

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Recent experience in the elver fishery has clearly demonstrated that existing monitoring and enforcement tools and resources are not sufficient to manage the conservation and protection of elver or appropriately safeguard personal safety.

In 2020, there were high levels of unauthorized fishing of elvers for sale in numerous rivers, threatening and potentially violent interactions between harvesters, and a dangerous operating environment for enforcement officers. These led the Minister to issue a fisheries management order closing the fishery on an urgent basis. In 2023, a further escalation led the Minister to issue another fisheries management order, closing the fishery on an urgent basis, in a season with more than 1,550 reported occurrences of unauthorized fishing in the Maritimes Region.

Immediately following the closure of the 2023 fishery, the Department launched an extensive review of the commercial elver fishery, rooted in lessons learned from other jurisdictions, including the State of Maine, which shared extensive information on their experience in developing a more manageable elver fishery.

In the course of the review it has become clear that the necessary changes include enhancing access for Indigenous communities, a new regulatory framework to regulate and license the possession and export of elvers, and a suite of operational changes to the management of the elver fishery. Many of the required changes would be contingent on the enactment of new regulations, including the design and implementation of a new traceability system to track the movement of elvers. Despite the Department's best efforts, these changes will not be in place to support a 2024 fishery.

Based on all the above, it is my view that it is not possible to have a safe and sustainable elver fishery in 2024, and therefore the fishery should not be opened.

If you have any relevant comment to inform my final decision, I would ask you to please provide them in writing to Jacinta Berthier, Regional Director – Fisheries Management, Maritimes Region (Jacinta.Berthier@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) by February 23, 2024. Any relevant written reply received by this date will be considered prior to my final decision.

Yours sincerely,



The Honourable Diane Lebouthillier, P.C., M.P.