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DWAN STREET  
*President*

Vacant  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

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August 5, 2025

Hon. Joanne Thompson  
Minister of Fisheries  
200 Kent St  
Station 15N100  
Ottawa ON  
K1A 0E6  
**Email:** [DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

Dear Minister Thompson,

The Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW-Unifor) represents thousands of inshore harvesters across Newfoundland and Labrador. We are writing to publicly and unequivocally state our **strong opposition** to the consideration of Virgin Rocks as a candidate Marine Protected Area (MPA) under Canada's 2030 marine conservation targets.

For generations, the marine areas around Virgin Rocks have been among the most productive and vital fishing grounds to fish harvesters in that region of our province. They once supported a thriving cod fishery and continue to provide critical grounds for flounder, whelk, and other groundfish species. The shoal waters near Virgin Rocks sustain a significant crab fishery, including fleets operating in Area 8 and small supplementary crab harvesters. A closure in this region would devastate these fleets and cripple entire coastal communities that depend on this access for their survival. The area is also a key site for the developing sea cucumber fishery. Simply put: **Virgin Rocks has always been, and will remain, a cornerstone of Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing industry.**

During a December 2024 meeting with FFAW, three candidate sites were presented. Of these, Virgin Rocks stands out as **completely unacceptable and non-negotiable**. By definition, a MPA prohibits all fishing activity—this would mean the total elimination of historic and ongoing fisheries in an area that has been sustainably harvested for generations.

It is unacceptable to suggest closing this essential fishing ground when **two other candidate sites**—one in 3Ps with workable boundaries, and one in deep Labrador waters that would have no impact on FFAW fishing operations—exist as viable alternatives. Choosing Virgin Rocks would show a clear disregard for the socioeconomic devastation it would cause.

FFAW-Unifor will not entertain, support, or remain silent on any proposal that threatens Virgin Rocks.

We call on your office to:

- **Immediately remove Virgin Rocks from MPA consideration.**
- Commit to **full and transparent consultations** with harvesters before advancing any site selection.
- Ensure the **socioeconomic impacts are fully assessed and released** to stakeholders before final decisions are made.

Marine conservation cannot succeed if it ignores the people who rely on and steward these resources. We urge you to work with harvesters—not against them—to meet conservation goals without destroying livelihoods and communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and to constructive dialogue on this critical issue.

Regards,



Dwan Street  
President  
FFAW-Unifor

Cc.

*Stephen Snow, Division Manager Oceans, DFO*  
*Clifford Small, MP, Central Newfoundland*  
*Carol Anstey, MP, Long Range Mountains*  
*Jonathan Rowe, MP, Terra Nova-The Peninsulas*  
*Paul Connors, MP, Avalon*  
*Tom Osborne, MP, Cape Spear*  
*Philip Earle, MP, Labrador*