

CBC News NB
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BURNT CHURCH, N.B. -

Ottawa extends Burnt Church lobster licence

Ottawa has decided to allow the Burnt Church Band in New Brunswick to catch lobster in Miramichi Bay for another eight weeks. This came after a temporary licence expired at midnight Monday.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans proposed a two-month fall fishery for the band, confining native fishermen to 900 lobster traps and small boats, using the catch only for food and ceremonial purposes.

The band rejected this proposal, so Fisheries Minister Herb Dhaliwal announced the temporary licence would be extended until Oct. 20.

Chief Wilbur Dedam said Ottawa's offer was too limited and it did not take into account aboriginal treaty rights to fish.

"It remains the position of Burnt Church not to enter into an interim agreement as proposed by the federal government, but to fish under our own fisheries management plan," he said.

The chief said he is not opposed to continued negotiations, but is opposed to any deal that doesn't respect aboriginal treaty rights.

Non-native fishermen are opposed to the fall lobster fishery because they claim the area cannot support two fishing seasons – one in the spring and the other in the fall.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has tried for the past three years to find a resolution to the dispute.