

Canadian seal hunt opens off Quebec

by UPI

MONTREAL -- The largest seal hunt in the world began at dawn Monday in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, around Quebec's Magdalen Islands, with a quota of 280,000 pelts.

Canadian Fisheries Minister Gail Shea said Friday this year's total allowable catch will come from a herd of more than 5.5 million harp seals, the Globe and Mail reported from Montreal.

In Newfoundland, a federal fisheries spokesman told VOCM Radio the hunt will be expanded this week and next to include more areas around the Maritime provinces depending on what aerial crews report about populations and locations.

The hunt is being closely followed by animal rights activists, including the Humane Society International-Canada, whose spokeswoman, Rebecca Aldworth criticized the Canadian government in an interview with the Globe.

"This is the time when we should be acting to protect seals threatened by global warming just like the polar bear population, and instead the Canadian government is imposing historic high quotas," Aldworth said.

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