

Canada's renewed commitments to Oceans Management: a Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) perspective

In response to the increased national and international efforts to protect ecosystems and mitigate impacts from human activities on ecosystem features, the Canadian government is committed to:

- Increasing the proportion of Canada's marine and coastal areas that is protected to 5% by 2017, and 10% by 2020;
- Work with the provinces and territories, Indigenous Peoples, and other stakeholders to better co-manage our three oceans;
- Use scientific evidence and the precautionary principle, and take into account climate change, when making decisions affecting fish stocks and ecosystem management;
- Examine the implications of climate change on Arctic marine ecosystems

These commitments will also support the 2016 Joint Canada-US Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership, to achieve and substantially surpass the 2020 goal of protecting 10% of the marine environment.

The principles of the Ecosystem Approach (EA) form the basis of DFO's effort to fulfill these commitments. EA is being advanced and implemented at multiple scales in coastal and marine areas through integrated oceans planning, marine conservation, as well as the development of sustainable fisheries strategies intended to conserve significant marine ecosystems such as coral and sponge areas.

EA progress to date has been made by DFO through various means:

- Identification of national level conservation objectives for biodiversity, productivity and habitat;
- Establishment of national and regional oceans management and Marine Protected Area (MPA) network goals, objectives and design strategies;
- Identification of Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas, Species and Critical Habitat for Species at Risk;
- Assessment and ranking of human-induced pressures against significant ecosystem features;
- Development of ecosystem models to better understand ecosystem interactions and to provide advice for decision-making;
- Development of standards for impacts to fish and fish habitat (e.g., sediment, flow) and reference points for stock biomass various fisheries.

Achieving these commitments will require a fully committed approach; engagement, consultation and collaboration are the foundation of Canada's approach to marine conservation. DFO is actively leading the coordination of Marine Protected Area (MPA) network development in its three Oceans with its co-management partners, Indigenous groups, Industry and Non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. Other existing effective area-based measures, measures which do not impart formal legislative protection but will contribute to its long-term conservation of biodiversity, will also be used. Such measures include fisheries closures, designated critical habitat for species at risk, oil and gas closures and marine

transportation special area designations. DFO Science provides ongoing research and collaboration with partners and community members to advance the state of knowledge of Canada's marine environments. Community based monitoring and assessment activities incorporate traditional knowledge and aim to better understand marine and freshwater ecosystems and the impacts of human activities. This knowledge is coupled with formal scientific analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of ecosystem components and function. Targeted research programs focus on addressing current and anticipatory key issues in Canadian waters, such as benthic impacts, mitigating by-catch, and climate change.

To fully implement an EA to Oceans Management and to achieve its commitments, it is essential that the Government of Canada continue to work with its international and Indigenous partners to advance policies and procedures to effectively incorporate ecosystems needs and conservation objectives into modern ocean management practices.