

Fisheries Management in Canada

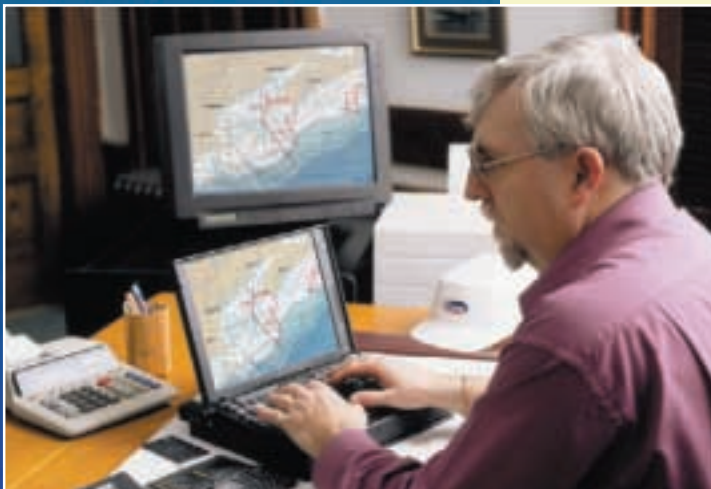


right: Trawler off Labrador

*below: Seabed Mapping
photo courtesy of Clearwater Fine Foods Inc.*

Canada's fisheries management system is among the most sophisticated and complex in the world. Following the 1992 closure of many Atlantic groundfish stocks and reduced catches in others, Canadian regulators and fishermen

agreed that quotas need to be based on reliable scientific and commercial knowledge. This requires a better understanding of how marine ecosystems work to ensure an accurate assessment of fish stocks and appropriate harvest levels.



The fishing industry shares with governments a commitment to responsible fishing and a sustainable fishery. This commitment has led to a growing financial contribution to science by the fishing industry and shared decision-making in resource protection and management programs.

Fisheries Council
of Canada



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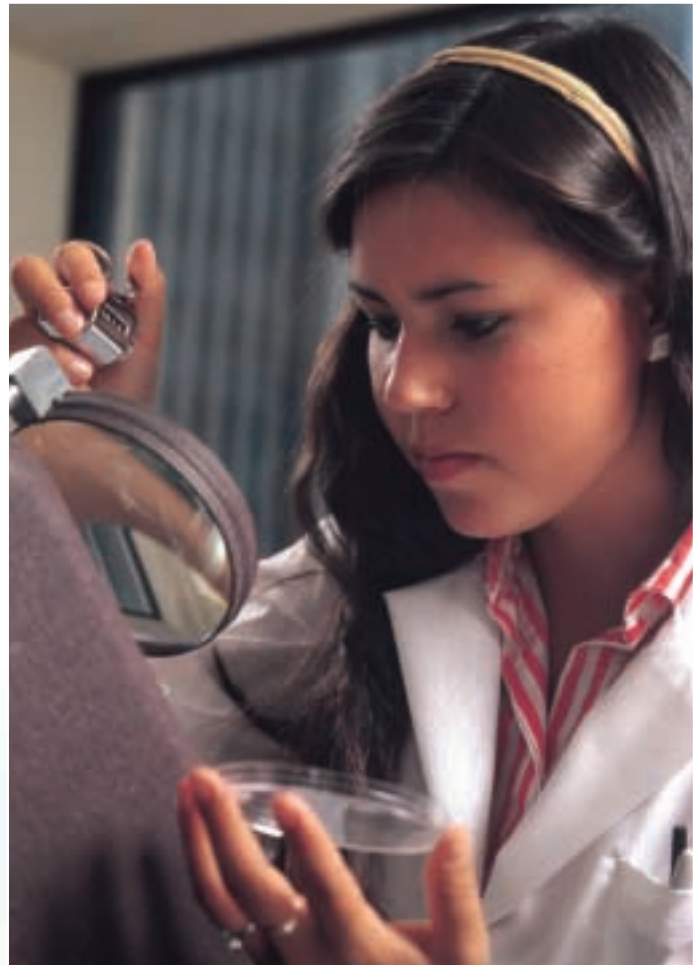


Science the foundation of fisheries management

The best way to ensure sustainable fisheries is through sound scientific research and advice. Scientists collect the information needed for analysis by conducting research surveys at sea. Research surveys involve fishing in certain areas to estimate the number of fish. Scientists also gather oceanographic and environmental information.

In addition, scientists sample fish caught commercially, collecting data on length, frequency and sex as well as spawning activity. Research at sea reveals important data on the number of fish, the number of spawning fish and the overall health of the fish making up a discrete stock of fish.

However, much remains to be learned, including the interrelationship among species and how fish stocks are affected by natural variations in ocean conditions and multiple stresses on the ecosystem. Changes to ocean conditions have been linked to the distribution, growth and recruitment of fish stocks. Of particular concern is any increase in global temperatures caused by climate change.



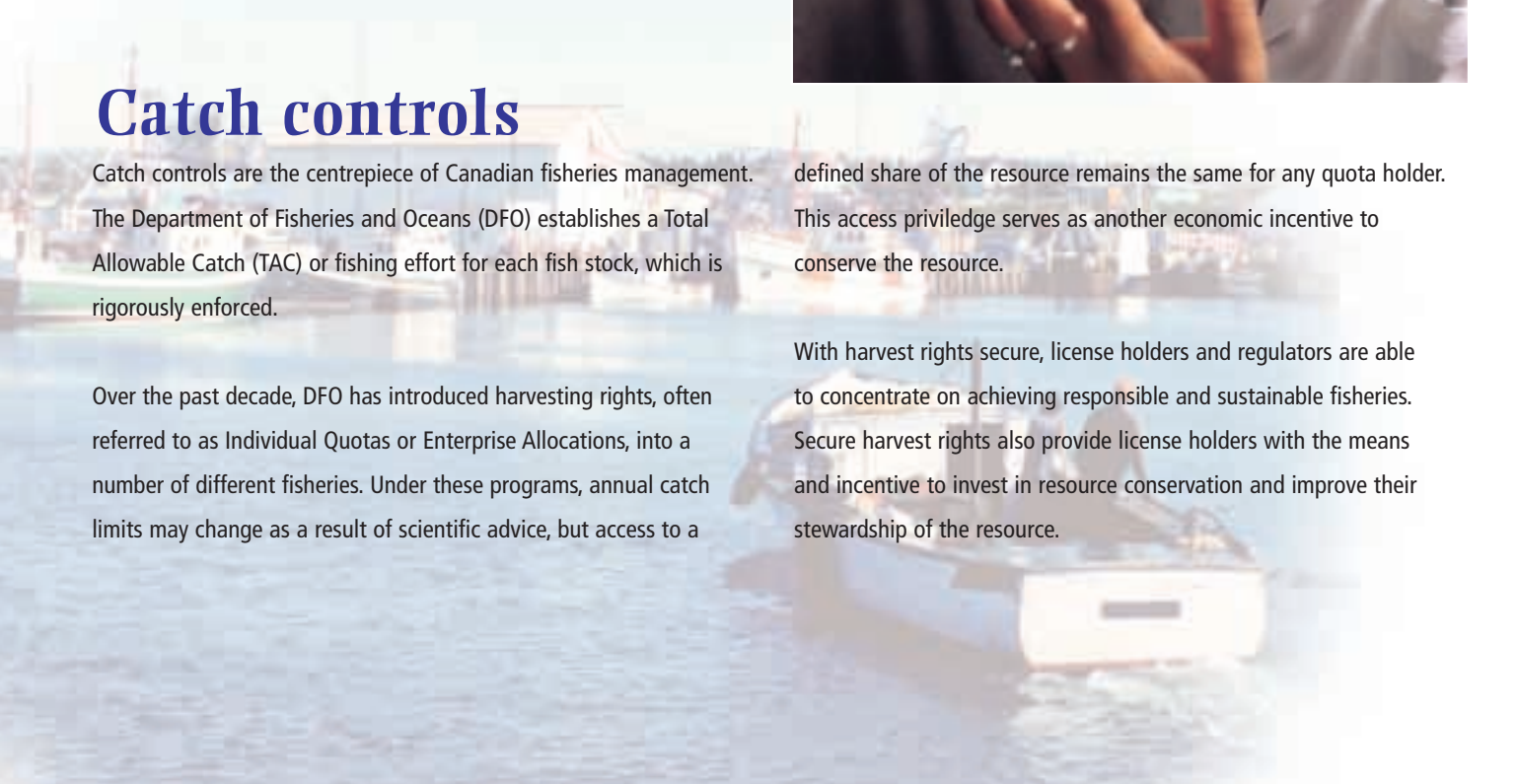
Catch controls

Catch controls are the centrepiece of Canadian fisheries management. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) establishes a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) or fishing effort for each fish stock, which is rigorously enforced.

Over the past decade, DFO has introduced harvesting rights, often referred to as Individual Quotas or Enterprise Allocations, into a number of different fisheries. Under these programs, annual catch limits may change as a result of scientific advice, but access to a

defined share of the resource remains the same for any quota holder. This access privilege serves as another economic incentive to conserve the resource.

With harvest rights secure, license holders and regulators are able to concentrate on achieving responsible and sustainable fisheries. Secure harvest rights also provide license holders with the means and incentive to invest in resource conservation and improve their stewardship of the resource.

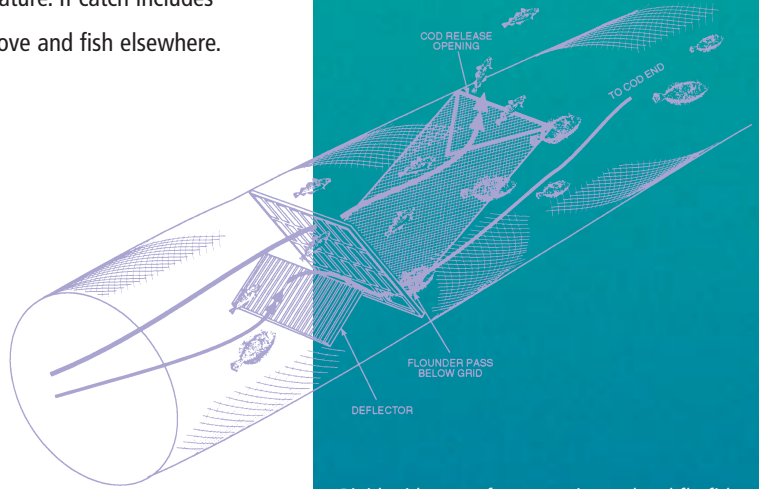


Size limits

Protecting small and juvenile fish is an important part of fisheries management. Canada requires that a specified percentage of fish caught be sexually mature. If catch includes immature fish, the fishery can be closed or vessels required to move and fish elsewhere.

Gear technology

The development and use of conservation harvesting technology, including improvements in the selectivity features of fishing gear, has contributed significantly to conservation. Selective fishing gear (nets, hooks, and so on) has been designed to catch only selected fish species or sizes, to allow marine mammals and birds to escape, or to minimize the impact on the seabed and marine environment.



Rigid grid system for separating cod and flatfish

Habitat

Healthy fish habitat is critical to healthy fish and fisheries. Habitat management aims to restore, protect and improve the marine and freshwater environment, as well as reduce the effect of pollution on marine ecosystems.

Fish habitat can be damaged in many ways. Among the most common threats are those associated with industrial and municipal liquid waste discharges, stream diversions, silt, barriers to migration, alteration of flow, nutrient imbalances, acid rain and toxic airborne contaminants, pesticides and other chemical, physical and biological agents. Under the Fisheries Act, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has responsibility for fish habitat protection, and altering or damaging fish habitat is prohibited.



International enforcement

Overfishing in international waters has contributed to the decline of fish stocks within Canada's 200-mile zone. Canada played a leading role in negotiating the United Nations Agreement on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, known as UNFA. This agreement, as well as Canada's participation in multilateral forums, will provide opportunities to achieve an effective high-seas enforcement regime for managing and conserving these stocks for future generations of Canadians.



Bush Island, Nova Scotia