



# SeaChoice Emerging Issues Bulletin

SeaChoice is a national program that helps Canadian businesses and consumers make the most sustainable seafood choices to support the long-term health of our ocean and coastal communities.

We bring together national experts from a variety of conservation organizations, and work with the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program to provide science-based fishery and aquaculture sustainability rankings.

Practices and products change over time, and so the focus of our work also changes. We wanted to take this opportunity to let you know about some of the new themes, as well as specific fisheries, we will be focusing on over the coming year, both as SeaChoice and as member organizations.

## NEW ISSUES FOR 2015:

### Atlantic Haddock: Choose Low Impact Gear and Support Coastal Communities



Many SeaChoice retail partners have a large market for haddock. Haddock is widely available, easy to cook, and comes at a price point that is desirable for customers. Haddock is an important fishery for Atlantic Canada, and is primarily caught in the Scotian Shelf, Bay of Fundy and Georges Bank (4X/5YZ management areas). This fishery is also MSC certified for all gear types. Coastal communities in Nova Scotia continue to rely on this fishery, and it helps to augment income and livelihoods in the off-season from the lobster fishery. While all Atlantic haddock is ranked "yellow" under the Seachoice program and is Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified across gear types, we believe that it is important to differentiate the fish that is caught by small-scale, independent fishers from that which is caught by large trawl operations. Small-scale fishers primarily use bottom longlines, which have a much lower impact on sensitive seabed communities and fish habitat. The independent fishing fleet is an important part of maintaining coastal communities, as they work for themselves, often with licenses that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Not only are these fishers using more sustainable gear types, but they also bring in high quality fish. Trawled fish is often brought up quickly from the depths, crushed under the weight of large catches, leaving the fish bruised before they are landed. The nature of longlining means that fish must be individually removed from their hooks, and are therefore handled more carefully.

Seasonality is also an issue in this fishery. Trawling routinely occurs in the winter months when haddock are spawning; this not only puts undue pressure on the stocks but also results in smaller fillets as haddock get thin when they are spawning. Purchasing frozen haddock in the winter months (caught the previous fall) is one way to address this issue. SeaChoice will be actively working in 2015 to make connections for leading retailers to a high quality supply of small-scale bottom longline caught haddock, so that this excellent and sustainable product can be profiled in-store soon. Stay tuned for more information about the opportunity to benefit and support this traditional fishery.



## British Columbia Groundfish: Changing Recommendations

On January 12<sup>th</sup> an updated assessment of British Columbia groundfish was released, this combined with Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) recommendations means that SeaChoice and Monterey Bay Aquarium can now recommend 88 percent of the volume of groundfish caught in BC waters. Six years ago, the same organizations recommended avoiding most of the fish caught by the province's largest fishery.

"This has been a remarkable conservation achievement," said Scott Wallace, Senior Research Scientist with the David Suzuki Foundation. "Ten years ago I would not have believed that we would be giving our support to so many of these fisheries that were once on our 'avoid' list."

"This is a good news story of how collaboration between industry, government and conservation organizations can drive solutions that lead to real change on the water," said Jenna Stoner, Sustainable Seafood Campaign Manager with Living Oceans Society.

Several species of sole, rockfish, Pacific cod, sablefish, Pacific hake and halibut were among the fish with positive assessments from the seafood organizations. This year's quota for B.C.'s groundfish fisheries is 168,000 tonnes.

Collaboration between the David Suzuki Foundation, Living Oceans Society and the bottom trawl industry on measures to manage for habitat impacts came into effect in April 2012 and led to big conservation gains. Reforms included protection of corals, sponges and deepwater habitats, creation of new trawl boundaries based on habitat types, establishment of the world's first habitat quota and enforcement of a coral and sponge encounter protocol.

Canada's Pacific groundfish fleet has also been recognized as a global leader in monitoring fish caught at sea. Longline and trawl vessels now have full monitoring, whether through an on-board observer or video coverage. An independent monitor also counts all fish arriving at the docks. "Being able to verify exactly what is caught by all vessels, for all species, for all trips is the cornerstone of this management system," Wallace said.

Several conservation concerns and 'avoid' recommendations were also identified in today's assessments, including outdated stock assessments and slow recovery of historically overfished species. Fortunately, the current management system offers solutions to these remaining issues. Updated stock assessments are anticipated in the next year to bring additional species into the recommended zone for consumers.

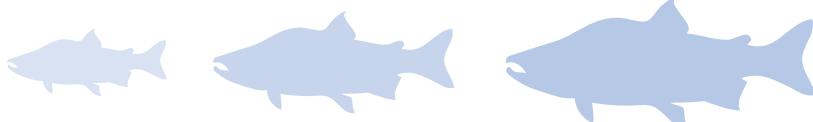


## Shrimp: Promoting Canadian alternatives to farmed shrimp



Wild-caught shrimp from Canadian waters are a much more sustainable alternative to most tropical farmed shrimp. While tropical farmed shrimp are larger and more well-known by consumers, their environmental impact is very high. Large areas of tropical coastal mangrove forests have been destroyed to use for shrimp farms. These are an important habitat for a diverse community of fish, invertebrates, plants and birds. This loss has devastating impacts on local communities and the artisanal fisheries and foraged foods that these people rely on. For this reason, it's extremely important to make use of the shrimp we catch right here in Canada. The majority of the shrimp caught in Canada is MSC certified (give areas?) and on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. In addition, there is a supply of high quality trap-caught shrimp, which has much lower environmental impacts than trawled shrimp, available on the Atlantic coasts.

SeaChoice will be working to collaborate with retail partners on a new campaign to profile sustainable wild-caught Canadian shrimp, and develop marketing tools and events to encourage the public to take advantage of this resource.



## Atlantic Salmon: the plot thickens with the development of genetically-modified salmon

SeaChoice has always recommended that retailers avoid open-net pen farmed Atlantic salmon, due to the threats they pose to wild salmon stocks and the marine environment. However, a new threat to wild salmon has now emerged: the development of a genetically modified salmon species in Canada. Crossed with genes of Coho salmon and ocean pout (an eel-like fish), the GM salmon is supposed to grow at a much faster rate. Eggs are currently being grown on Prince Edward Island. While still in government processes for approval for human consumption, the risk to wild stocks is nonetheless high – while the female fish are supposed to be sterile, the company that manufactures them has admitted that up to 5 per cent could be fertile. An escape could threaten the existence of wild Atlantic salmon stocks, which is already endangered.

Many key retailers in the US have already pledged that they will not sell GM salmon if it is approved for human consumption and the state of California has banned the commercial production of GM salmon in order to protect the wild salmon fishery.

SeaChoice will be working with partners to develop similar commitments in Canada for the purpose of minimizing risks to wild salmon stocks.

## OTHER ITEMS /ISSUES

### National Sustainable Seafood Day



On May 9<sup>th</sup> 2015, MP Fin Donnelly and Canadian conservation groups Ocean Wise, SeaChoice, WWF, Greenpeace, Chefs for Oceans, and the Marine Stewardship Council will be co-hosting the third event in support of a National Sustainable Seafood Day in Canada. The 2015 event will be held at the Toronto Four Seasons Hotel where local chefs will prepare sustainable Canadian seafood tastings while helping to build awareness around the importance of choosing seafood responsibly. This event will also offer the opportunity to announce multiple major retailers and restaurants across Canada signing on in support of National Sustainable Seafood Day.

Past events have been held in Vancouver and on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and in October of 2013 Fin Donnelly tabled the motion within Parliament. If adopted Canada would be only the second country, behind Australia, to celebrate a National Sustainable Seafood Day. A dedicated sustainable seafood day would bring the issues of overfishing and poor fishing methods to the forefront of Canadian minds to help protect our seafood stocks for generations to come.

To learn more about National Sustainable Seafood Day, visit: <http://findonnelly.ndp.ca/seafoodpetition>



### FAO Guidelines on Small Scale Fisheries

In June of 2014, the Food and Agriculture Organization finalized the Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries. Canada was one of the countries in attendance and agreed to the language in the Guidelines. This is an important outcome for coastal communities, as fisheries are in many cases the largest single industry. SeaChoice member organizations will be promoting the implementation of these Guidelines over the coming year, with a focus on who fishes matters, and ensuring that small scale, high quality seafood is rewarded by an inviting and appreciative market place.