

## **B.C. fisheries' sustainability achievements recognized for first time**

**For Immediate Release:** Top North American seafood organizations have given a stamp of approval for the first time to several of B.C.'s groundfish fisheries. Today's recommendations from the U.S. Monterey Bay Aquarium's (MBA) Seafood Watch Program and Canada's SeaChoice program, combined with earlier Marine Stewardship Council recommendations, mean that over 88 per cent of groundfish caught in Canada's Pacific waters can be recommended to consumers. 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Several conservation concerns and 'avoid' recommendations were also identified in today's assessments, including outdated stock assessments and slow recovery of historically overfished species.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.

MBA completed assessments for Alaska and the west coast of the United States, which also showed sustainability improvements. "Seafood Watch now has more than 100 'Best Choice' and 'Good Alternative' consumer recommendations for groundfish from Baja to B.C. to the Bering Sea," says the program's Science Manager Santi Roberts. "Given that many of these fish don't recognize international boundaries, we need strong management throughout the North Pacific."

The David Suzuki Foundation and the Living Oceans Society also released a [video](#) today with an inside look at how former adversaries became collaborators in fisheries management improvements.

The David Suzuki Foundation and Living Oceans Society are members of SeaChoice, a Canada-wide program that helps businesses and consumers make choices to support the health of marine ecosystems. Sustainability rankings are based on a green (best choice), yellow (some concerns) and red (avoid) spectrum.

[Download MBA assessment report \(PDF\)](#)

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