

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Sustainable Fisheries Framework

Issue

The Sustainable Fisheries Framework is a toolbox of existing and new measures for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and other interests to sustainably manage Canadian fisheries in order to conserve fish stocks and support prosperous fisheries.

Fisheries worldwide are under increasing pressure, creating challenges for policymakers, resource managers and industry leaders to make informed decisions regarding the conservation, recovery and wise management of these precious resources. DFO held consultations throughout Canada in 2007-08 to develop strategies to ease ecosystem pressures and enhance the capacity of the resource to sustain growing industry needs. New conservation policies have been developed to implement the ecosystem and precautionary approaches to fisheries management. These new policies, in addition to revised Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) templates, will join existing policies and tools in a new framework to promote sustainable fisheries.

All resource users share the common goal of diverse and well-managed fisheries that sustain current and future generations of Canadian harvesters. The Sustainable Fisheries Framework (SFF) provides planning and operational tools that allow policy goals of long-term sustainability and economic prosperity to be achieved in a clear and predictable way, and within transparent and effective governance structures.

These policies will be implemented in fisheries beginning in the 2009 fishing season in a phased manner based on regional priorities. This communications plan recommends a low-key, phased approach to introduce the department's SFF, and position it within the Fisheries Renewal Initiative.

Communications Objectives

- manage expectations of how SFF policies will be implemented in each fishery.
- ensure target audiences understand the scope and implications of the SFF and its components
- position the SFF as a means to achieve long-term sustainability and economic prosperity in the Canadian fishery.

Target Audiences

- DFO staff
- Fishing Industry, including Aboriginal, commercial and recreational fisheries participants
- Parliament
- ENGOs
- Provinces and Territories
- International
- Other members of the seafood value chain, including processors and marketers

Strategic Considerations

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Issue: Negative reaction by fishing industry participants: concerns about added burden of costs and constraints on fishing

Strategy: Emphasize the engagement of external groups that have assisted or informed DFO as these initial policies were being developed. Position SFF as a set of "evolving policies" that will be implemented incrementally, and emphasize that some aspects of the policies have already been applied in some fisheries and regions. Based on feedback from Fisheries Managers and clients, the policies will be fine-tuned over time to ensure sustainable Canadian fisheries over the long term. Involve industry in development of a risk assessment framework.

Issue: Negative reaction by ENGOs; concerns that policies don't go far enough to conserve fish and fish habitat, or that implementation is not occurring quickly enough.

Strategy: Involve ENGOs in the development of a risk assessment framework to guide implementation of the new policies. This will help to obtain some buy-in to the SFF implementation process. Use the example of changes made to the Benthic Habitat policy that addressed a key concern of ENGOs (impacts of bottom contact gear).

Issue: Stressing sustainability implies past and current practices aren't sustainable.

Strategy: Recognize successes and failures. Emphasize that DFO is continually striving to improve, that SFF policies are designed to make our basis for decisions more transparent, and to help deliver a more coherent and systematic process for implementing ecosystem and precautionary approaches. These new policies were developed to provide a more rigorous, nationally consistent approach, consistent with international norms.

Issue: Negative reaction from Aboriginal groups which may be dissatisfied with the level of engagement or consultation and which may have concerns about the impact of new policies and tools on Aboriginal and treaty rights and/or on Aboriginal fisheries now and into the future.

Strategy: In addition to ongoing engagement and consultation with Aboriginal interests, a separate process is being developed to define and address concerns and issues specific to Aboriginal groups within the implementation phase of the policies. Input derived from this process will be an important consideration in helping to frame approaches and phasing in new policies and tools. Communications products that support and explain this separate process will be developed.

Issue: Negative reaction from Aboriginal groups which may be dissatisfied with the lack of consideration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) / Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) in the new policies and tools.

Strategy: In addition to consultation and engagement with Aboriginal groups, when implementing the SFF, policies and tools or when developing new policies and tools, TEK / ATK will be considered, like any other information and data submitted. DFO's other consultation processes have mechanisms in place to consider ATK / TEK, such as the CSAS process. The information gathered through the CSAS process is subject to scientific peer review. Also, the new Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) template requires a brief overview of TEK for the species being harvested, if available.

Key Messages

- We work with resource users to develop plans, policies and tools for the sustainable management of Canadian fisheries.
 - We are introducing new policies and tools to improve fisheries management to address challenges, respond to conservation concerns and international obligations and domestic and international market pressures.
 - At the same time, in response to Canada's desires for increased transparency, we are improving fisheries governance.
 - We have developed the Sustainable Fisheries Framework to provide a focal point for policies and tools to ensure long-term sustainability and economic prosperity.
 - The new conservation and sustainable use policies to implement the Precautionary Approach and Ecosystem Approaches are an immediate priority.
 - The Sustainable Fisheries Framework will evolve as the needs of the fishery change.
- We will continue to work with resources users to develop the fisheries management regime in support of long-term sustainability and economic prosperity.

Communications Approach, Activities and Tools

The recommended Communications Strategy is a low-key approach to introduce the department's Sustainable Fisheries Framework, and position it as an element of the Fisheries Renewal Initiative. Some aspects of the SFF policies have already been applied in some fisheries and regions, while others will be phased in over time based on DFO priorities and through existing fishery planning processes which include the engagement and participation of resource users. Communications activities will accordingly be targeted primarily at resource users, and will include both an overarching SFF storyline, as well as targeted pieces for introduction of specific SFF elements to various fisheries. Close cooperation with regional offices and adequate lead time for sensitizing and engaging resource users will be critical.

The Framework is being implemented using a phased approach, and work is already under way to develop and disseminate Sustainable Seafood messaging, including fact sheets and information sessions with seafood buyers. Communications are phased and targeted to the needs of specific fisheries. Timelines for implementation are tied to ongoing work with fishing industry to ensure sustainability is incorporated into their decision-making. Secondary messaging will be developed for specific audiences as required.

- Web-post fact sheets to outline policies.
- Work with regions to develop common messaging, and address region-specific concerns.
- Create a plain language public awareness "storyline" to outline the importance of fisheries sustainability, for internal, regional and external use.
- Create and disseminate a glossary and visual elements that help to explain SFF process and impacts.
- Pre-position release of materials with targeted specialized media (Fisheries Broadcast, Sou'wester, etc.)
- Continue ongoing outreach to industry and third-party spokespersons to build awareness and incorporate sustainability messaging into their communications.
- Ongoing briefing sessions within fisheries advisory processes and with Aboriginal fishery participants to explain policy goals and expected impacts, and discuss actions to implement.

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