

National Habitat Compliance Protocol Communications Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this communications plan is to inform staff of the revised National Habitat Compliance Protocol and how it will be implemented.

Background

In January 2007, the Assistant Deputy Ministers of Oceans, Habitat and Species at Risk and of Fisheries and Aquaculture Management signed the *National Habitat Compliance Protocol* (the Protocol) to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the Habitat Management Program (HMP) and Conservation and Protection (C&P) in the delivery of an integrated habitat compliance program. The Protocol had a two-year term which has expired.

In spring 2009, the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development conducted an audit of Environment Canada (EC) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). The audit report included a number of recommendations to improve delivery of the habitat compliance management program, including the need to further clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities.

The National Protocol (2007) has since been reviewed by HMP and C&P. Roles and responsibilities have been amended, particularly as they apply to occurrence screening and enforcement activities.

Target Audiences

- Regional HMP Biologists and C&P Fishery Officers
- Regional HMP and C&P Managers

Communications Objectives

- Inform regional employees of the National Habitat Compliance Protocol amendments.
- Explain how these amendments will be implemented.
- Encourage management participation in amendment implementation.
- Reduce employee concerns by ensuring they understand what the amendments mean for them.

Strategic Considerations

The revised National Habitat Compliance Protocol is overdue, and is still awaiting approval. Once approved, communicating promptly with all implicated staff will be important to reassure them that an effective implementation plan is in place.

Products for external audiences, such as speaking points for senior officials and Media Lines, will be developed as needed to explain why these changes are beneficial and what they will mean for the public.

Key Messages

- DFO remains committed to achieving compliance with the habitat protection provisions of the *Fisheries Act* through its integrated habitat compliance management program.
- DFO is committed to compliance monitoring and values the information employees collect.
- Under the revised Protocol, HMP staff will continue to monitor compliance with, and effectiveness of, regulatory requirements for protecting fish and fish habitat, and will facilitate voluntary action to improve protection.
- Under the revised Protocol, activities aimed at compelling compliance, including the issuance of Inspector's directions, warnings and Ministerial orders will be led by Fishery Officers with support by HMP.
- HMP staff will assess the overall compliance risk for all habitat occurrences, with support from C&P. This assessment will identify the level of priority of the occurrences, determine the lead responder, and inform the appropriate level of response.
- Regions will continue to rely on their own regional protocols, which will be revised to reflect the amendments to the National Protocol.
- An implementation plan has been developed to guide regions in adapting roles and responsibilities and to ensure staff have been properly trained and designated.
- Effectiveness and employee safety are key concerns – only properly designated and trained employees will be able to conduct compliance monitoring and enforcement activities.
- This protocol will further the integration of C&P's work with that of Habitat Management Operations, a process that began with the introduction of the 2007 Protocol and improved with the recent departmental reorganization.

Communications Activities

- A memo will be sent by the DM to the RDGs to:
 - Tell them the protocol is about to be shared with employees

- Explain that their involvement is key to successful implementation
 - Encourage them to meet and discuss the Protocol with their staff and identify the internal communications tools that will be made available to support these discussions
 - Encourage their feedback so that tools can be adjusted as needed.
- A message will be sent by the Directors General of HMP and C&P to all regional staff affected to:
 - Announce the approval of the revised Protocol
 - Present high-level messages about the revised Protocol
 - Provide a link to the signed document on the Intranet Site
 - Encourage staff to discuss implications and implementation of the revised Protocol with their regional management teams.
- A Questions and Answers document that addresses the potential concerns of staff regarding the Protocol, to be provided to regional management teams.
- A PowerPoint slide presentation that provides more detail on the roles and responsibilities identified in the revised Protocol, and that describes the elements of the implementation plan, to be provided to regional management teams.

Budget

N/A

Evaluation

Feedback will be obtained from the regional HMP monitoring team leaders and from the regional C&P habitat specialists. This feedback will be used to improve and revise communications products as necessary.