



Atlantic Cod catch.
photo courtesy of
DFO.

Invest in Future (Fisheries) Stock

Improving Protections for Canadian Marine Fishes.

In Summary

- The Species At Risk Act does not adequately protect Threatened and Endangered marine fishes.
- Past actions by the DFO have put Threatened and Endangered species at increased risk.
- Pressuring SARA to list more marine fishes and restoring the full power of the Fisheries Act will preserve fish stocks for future Canadians.

Background

In the past, Canada has been a world leader in oceans and fisheries protections. Since approximately 2006, however, protections for fish habitats across Canada have waned. This is due to the failure of multiple protective measures to meet their goals.

The [Species at Risk Act](#) was specifically designed to prevent the extinction of Canadian wildlife, which implicitly includes Canadian marine fishes as well as terrestrial wildlife. However, of all the marine species identified by the [Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada \(COSEWIC\)](#) as being at risk, very few make it onto the SARA list. And after 2012, when amendments to the [Fisheries Act](#) rendered it functionally unable to protect fish habitats, marine fish species protections have fallen by the wayside nationwide.

Issues in Fish Protection

- At-risk fish species are less likely to be protected under [SARA](#) or the [Fisheries Act](#) if they belong to big commercial fisheries.
- On average, it takes **over 3 years** for [SARA](#) to make a decision about a marine fish species identified as **at-risk** by [COSEWIC](#). Some species have spent as long as **9 years** waiting for a decision.
- In that time, there are **no protections** available to the at-risk species, and fishing quotas can even **increase** in the interim.
- Since there are no protections in place for species while they wait for [SARA](#) decisions, many marine species' [COSEWIC](#) status goes from **bad to worse**.
- Without any protective measures, important species like [Sockeye Salmon](#), [Bluefin Tuna](#), and [Atlantic Cod](#) stocks are being depleted, which will lead to **negative economic consequences** for fisheries.

BRIEF RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Push agencies to develop interim protection plans for at-risk species

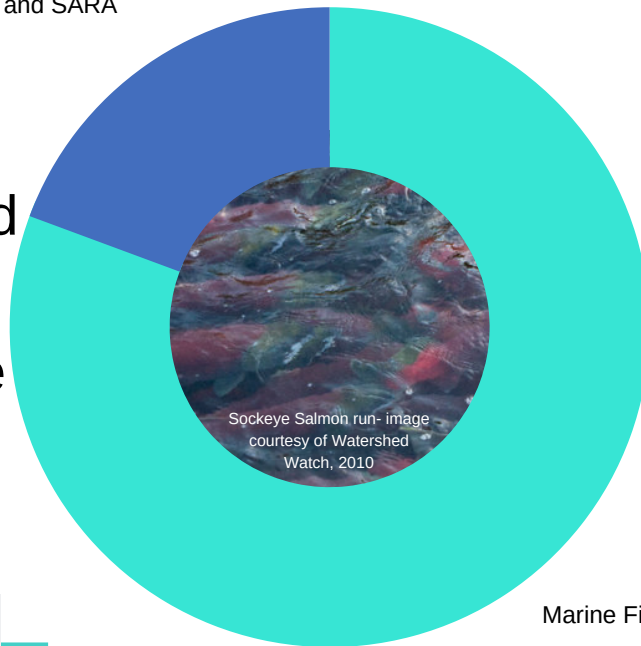
2 Encourage decision-making based on long term, not short term, economic gain.

3 Support Bill C-86, restoring the Fisheries Act

Marine Fishes listed on COSEWIC and SARA

19.4%

Only 12 of 62 species identified as at-risk by COSEWIC were also listed by SARA by 2015.



"Marine fishes in Canada are missing the safety net that is meant to be provided by SARA or the Fisheries Act."

- McDevitt-Irwin et al, 2015

Marine Fishes listed on COSEWIC only
80.6%

Find the Gap:

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

A 2014 increase in the international allowable catch of bluefin tuna was projected to bring CAD\$2 million into the Atlantic economy. Here is the Bluefin Tuna's current conservation status from a number of organizations:

COSEWIC: *Endangered*

SARA: *No Status*

IUCN Red List:

Endangered and Decreasing

Ocean Wise: *Not Recommended*

Recommendations

Interim Protection Plans

One of the biggest risks to Canada's vulnerable fisheries stocks is the **lack of protections** that kick in immediately after being assessed as at-risk by COSEWIC due to commercial demands. In consultation with fisheries and scientists, DFO should develop a set of protocols that take effect immediately after COSEWIC decisions are announced, while more targeted conservation plans are developed.

The Economic Long Game

Part of the trend identified in the literature is a disturbing tendency for **commercially valuable fish to not be listed** or given protections under the law. While this leads to short term economic gains in the current season, in the long term depletion of the fisheries stocks leads to collapse of that economic sector. By taking a long game approach to categorizing these species, SARA listings can be utilised more effectively.

Repair the Fisheries Act

By supporting Bill C-68, set to appear before the House of Commons before the end of 2019, you can empower the Fisheries Act to reclaim its place as a golden standard in global marine conservation legislation. Amending the Fisheries Act will enable DFO to act more in accordance with science and conservation concerns, and will likely lead to more species being listed under SARA in the future.

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