

Fishery Audit: 2021 Recommendations and To-Do Checklist

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Recommendations – Make the Next Five Years Count

Canada has the tools to restore abundance to our oceans. But now we need to step up our efforts to use them – matching action with the urgency the situation demands. Because we simply cannot afford another five years without meaningful progress in the water.

Real change for Canada's fisheries will require adopting globally accepted and proven best practices. At a minimum, Canada must:

1. **Pass strong rebuilding regulations:** Canada's *Fisheries Act* now requires that DFO takes action to rebuild depleted fisheries; however, it still lacks the regulations that define how rebuilding will be accomplished. These regulations must require that rebuilding plans include scientifically estimated timelines and targets in the healthy and take into account all sources of fishing mortality.
2. **Make decisions about wild fish based on science and Indigenous Knowledge:** Fisheries management decisions must include Indigenous evidence, practice and knowledge systems and follow the best available science.
3. **Integrate ocean ecosystem considerations:** DFO must take into account the ecosystem impacts of fisheries decisions, aggressively work to rebuild depleted forage fish and address the vulnerability of species to climate change impacts.
4. **Count everything caught in a fishery** – including for recreational and bait purposes – and account for all sources of fishing in management decision-making.

To address these high-level priorities and accelerate the implementation of Canada's Sustainable Fisheries Framework, Oceana Canada calls on DFO to complete the key actions outlined in the checklist below within the next year. This includes fulfilling ongoing commitments or those that have been delayed from previous work plans, as well as those scheduled to be completed this fiscal year.¹

Checklist:

At minimum it is expected that DFO will continue to add to, update, and publicly release the [Sustainable Fisheries Framework Work Plan](#), developed in response to an audit of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD),² using the best available science to inform completion of deliverables. To accelerate the implementation of

¹ Archibald, D.W. & Rangeley, R. (2021). Canada's Progress towards Completing Commitments to Implement the Sustainable Fisheries Framework. In: *Fishery Audit: 2021*. Oceana Canada.

<https://oceana.ca/en/publications/reports/fishery-audit-2021>

² CESD (2016). *Report 2 – Sustaining Canada's Major Fish Stocks – Fisheries and Oceans Canada*. Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_201610_02_e_41672.html

DFO's policy framework, Oceana Canada recommends and expects the following actions to be completed by DFO within the next year.

Science

- Invest resources in timely stock assessments that include estimates of mortality from all sources, prioritizing stocks that do not have assessments or that have assessments more than five years old.
- Continue to address the causes of delays in publishing Science information and improve publication timeliness.
- Continue to prioritize establishing reference points to define health status zones and develop harvest control rules (HCRs) for each zone. Specifically, fulfill the following ongoing commitments or those that have been delayed from previous work plans, as well as those scheduled to be completed this fiscal year:
 - Develop LRPs for six more stock groups,³ ensuring at least 14 more index stocks⁴ have new or updated LRPs next year, which would increase the percentage of index stocks with LRPs to 71.6 per cent;
 - Develop USRs for seven more stock groups,⁵ ensuring at least 14 more index stocks⁶ have a new or updated USR next year, which would increase the percentage of index stocks with USRs to 54.1 per cent; and
 - Develop HCRs for three more stock groups,⁷ ensuring at least three more index stocks⁸ have new or updated HCRs next year.

Monitoring

- Increase the following efforts to implement of the Fishery Monitoring Policy to ensure all commercial fisheries have sufficient monitoring to provide dependable estimates of fishing mortality from all sources:
 - Provide dedicated operating resources for policy implementation over the next five years to ensure all major fish stocks have their fishery monitoring programs reviewed under its standards;

³ Stock groups noted in the 2021/22 work plan for completion of LRP development, updating, or revision (i.e., marked as "will complete") by the end of the fiscal year, plus any outstanding LRP commitments from previous work plans. Note this tally is based off Table 2 in Archibald and Rangeley (2021) and may include diadromous fish, freshwater fish, and marine mammals.

⁴ Marine fish and invertebrate stocks included in Ocean Canada's Fishery Audit index dataset

⁵ Stock groups noted in the 2021/22 work plan for completion of USR development, updating, or revision (i.e., marked as "will complete") by the end of the fiscal year, plus any outstanding USR commitments from previous work plans. Note this tally is based off Table 3 in Archibald and Rangeley (2021) and may include diadromous fish, freshwater fish, and marine mammals.

⁶ Marine fish and invertebrate stocks included in Ocean Canada's Fishery Audit index dataset

⁷ Stock groups noted in the 2021/22 work plan for completion of HCR development, updating, or revision (i.e., marked as "will complete") by the end of the fiscal year, plus any outstanding HCR commitments from previous work plans. Note this tally is based off Table 4 in Archibald and Rangeley (2021) and may include diadromous fish, freshwater fish, and marine mammals.

⁸ Marine fish and invertebrate stocks included in Ocean Canada's Fishery Audit index dataset

- Include policy implementation progress in the annual Sustainable Fisheries Framework Work Plan, prioritizing stocks suspected of having fishery monitoring data quality issues, and including at least five stocks for complete implementation in each DFO Region every year until the policy has been implemented for all major stocks; and
- Provide performance measurements that evaluate progress to achieve the policy objectives for all major stocks in a published annual report to the Minister with targets and timelines for nationwide implementation starting in 2021.

Management

- Continue to prioritize completing and publishing management plans. Specifically, fulfill the following ongoing commitments or those that have been delayed from previous work plans, as well as those scheduled to be completed this fiscal year:
 - Develop and publish IFMPs for 15 stock groups,⁹ ensuring at least 20 more index stocks¹⁰ are included in a publicly available IFMP next year, which would increase the percentage of index stocks with new or updated IFMPs to 93.3 per cent; and
 - Develop and publish rebuilding plans for nine more stocks:
 1. Atlantic cod – southern Gulf of St. Lawrence (NAFO 4TVn)
 2. Atlantic herring – southern Gulf of St. Lawrence spring spawners (NAFO 4T)
 3. American plaice – southern Gulf of St. Lawrence (NAFO 4T)
 4. White hake – southern Gulf of St. Lawrence (NAFO 4T)
 5. Winter flounder – southern Gulf of St. Lawrence (NAFO 4T)
 6. Chinook salmon – west coast Vancouver Island
 7. Pacific herring – Haida Gwaii
 8. Atlantic cod – NAFO 3Ps
 9. Witch flounder – NAFO 2J+3KL
- Set priorities and timelines for completing rebuilding plans for all stocks in the critical zone and those in the cautious zone that are declining towards, or have declined, to half of their USR.

⁹ Stock groups noted in the 2021/22 work plan for completion of IFMP development, updating, or revision (i.e., marked as “will complete”) by the end of the fiscal year, plus any outstanding IFMP commitments from previous work plans. Note this tally is based off Table 6 in Archibald and Rangeley (2021) and may include diadromous fish, freshwater fish, and marine mammals.

¹⁰ Marine fish and invertebrate stocks included in Ocean Canada’s Fishery Audit index dataset