

Sustainable Groundfish Resources

FROM CANADA'S PACIFIC COAST



British Columbia, Canada's Pacific Coast province, is a world leader in groundfish management. Its innovative Integrated Groundfish Management Program promotes the sustainability of BC's fishery resources by accounting for all catch in the groundfish industry.



(left to right) Hake, Lingcod, Pacific Ocean Perch, Arrowtooth Flounder, Petrale Sole

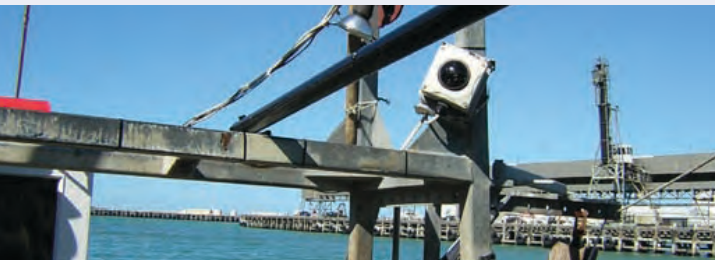
BC's Groundfish Fisheries

BC's groundfish industry harvests more than 56 different stocks of groundfish. Primary species include halibut, sablefish, lingcod, dogfish, soles, flatfish, and rockfish. There are approximately 2000 groundfish licenses employing trawl (142), trap (48) and hook and line (1800) gear.

BC's New Groundfish Management Program

Discarding of fish at sea due to the unmarketability of some species or sizes caught is an important issue for the sustainability of the world's fisheries. It is estimated that over 20% of the total global catch is discarded. Uncounted catch and discard mortality undermines proper stock assessment and could result in over harvesting.

To address this, BC implemented an innovative, integrated groundfish management program in 2006. This world-leading system ensures the harvesting of groundfish in a sustainable manner using a variety of fishing gears, and uses new forms of information technology, including video monitoring, to account for all fish caught and minimize the need to discard marketable fish.



onboard video camera shown here.

POSITIVE CHANGES

A complete overhaul of groundfish fisheries management was implemented in 2006. The new leading edge program includes:

- > Allocating each vessel a specified share of the annual total allowable catch.
- > Making each individual vessel accountable and responsible for all of its catch, both directed and non-directed.
- > 100% dockside monitoring of all landed catch by government-certified monitors.
- > 100% at-sea monitoring on all groundfish bottom trawl vessels by government-certified observers.
- > 100% at-sea monitoring of all groundfish hook & line and trap vessels by government approved video camera systems.

BENEFITS OF THESE CHANGES

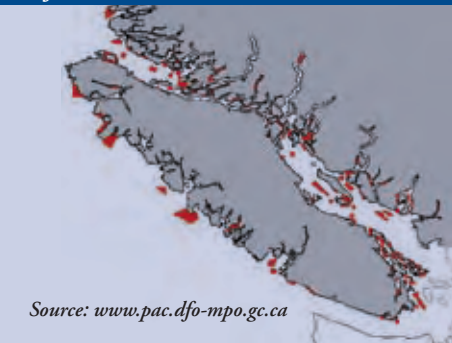
The use of individual vessel allocations and comprehensive at-sea and dockside monitoring provides for:

- > Accurate reporting of all catch, including at-sea releases, by species and area.
- > Proper stock management within scientifically determined sustainable harvest levels.
- > More responsible fishing by prohibiting individual vessels from exceeding their allocated share.
- > Greater incentives to fish selectively and minimize at-sea releases.
- > Safer fishing practices.

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S INTEGRATED GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
WILL ENSURE OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD MARKET AS A SUPPLIER
OF SUSTAINABLE AND HIGH QUALITY SEAFOOD PRODUCTS.



BC's groundfish fisheries extend from Juan de Fuca Strait to Dixon Entrance.



Source: www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca

BC Groundfish - Other Sustainability Measures

To further support sustainability of the BC's groundfish resources, the Canadian government has established:

164 Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) throughout the BC coast to protect rockfish and their habitat.

Closures around important sponge reefs in Queen Charlotte Sound and Hecate Strait.

The use of **precautionary management** to set annual harvest levels (for example, rockfish harvest levels are set at between 2% and 5% of the estimated mature stock size).

Coastwide groundfish surveys to monitor stock health and accurately set sustainable harvest levels.

RCAs (in Red) in Area's 11-29, 111 & 121-127 (2007)

Integrated Groundfish Management will help eliminate discarding of yelloweye rockfish by BC hook and line, and trap fisheries.

DID YOU KNOW...

- > Unlike previous years, almost all of the 56 different groundfish stocks were underharvested in 2006.
- > There are less than 50 active groundfish bottom trawl vessels and their total fishing activity makes contact with less than 10% of BC's seafloor.
- > BC's bottom trawl fishery is small in comparison to other trawl fisheries around the world.
- > Compared to historical levels, BC groundfish fisheries are catching less fish annually, thanks to more selective fishing and the establishment of precautionary harvest levels.



RESULT OF THESE CHANGES

The new groundfish initiatives have resulted in significant improvements in the management of groundfish resources, including:

- > Both landed catch and at-sea release mortality are kept well within species and area specific sustainable harvest levels.
- > Better quality data from commercial harvesting, surveys, and at-sea biological samples provide for improved research and assessment of stock health.
- > Reduced impacts to habitat from fishing area closures, and reductions in the number of vessels fishing, gear set, fishing time, and area fished.

These improvements will position the BC groundfish industry to seek Marine Stewardship Council* (MSC) certification of its fisheries.

BC Hake and Halibut fisheries are currently undergoing full MSC assessment. Several other BC fisheries are in the process of seeking certification.

**The Marine Stewardship Council is an independent, global, nonprofit organization that meets FAO guidelines and whose role is to recognise well-managed fisheries via a scientifically-based independent certification program. Retailers and consumers are showing an increased preference for seafood products bearing the MSC label of approval.*



Oceans & Marine Fisheries
Ministry of Environment



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