



FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA
MARITIMES REGION
2014

REGIONAL OCEANS PLAN

SCOTIAN SHELF | ATLANTIC COAST | BAY OF FUNDY

Implementation Priorities: 2014-2017



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INTRODUCTION

The Regional Oceans Plan outlines the approach and actions that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is taking to support oceans and coastal management in the Maritimes Region. The Plan responds to DFO’s responsibilities under the *Oceans Act* to lead and facilitate integrated and ecosystem approaches to the management of Canada’s oceans. The Plan represents an evolution of previous oceans and coastal management efforts within the Maritimes Region, including the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management (ESSIM) Initiative that concluded in 2012. The current approach moves beyond the Large Ocean Management Area (LOMA) concept applied in the earlier phases of DFO’s Integrated Oceans Management Program to one that is based on nationally defined marine bioregions. The Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy bioregion corresponds to DFO’s Maritimes Region and provides the geographic basis for the Plan.

The Plan supports a new approach for the Integrated Oceans Management Program that is focussed on priority management needs and activities that are identified through ecosystem and risk management approaches, and addressed through effective management instruments and tools. Within this approach, DFO commitments and actions for oceans and coastal management are clearly aligned and linked with the department’s mandate, authorities and responsibilities.

The Regional Oceans Plan is organized in two documents:

The *Background and Program Description* for the Plan provides a detailed description of DFO’s Integrated Oceans Management Program in the Maritimes Region. The *Introduction* section describes the purpose, vision, goals and guiding principles for the Plan and the activities under



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it. The *Regional Overview* section identifies the ecological, socio-economic and jurisdictional contexts for oceans and coastal management. The *Oceans and Coastal Management* and *Marine Protected Area Planning and Management* sections set out the department’s core Oceans Act programs, capacities and activities in the Maritimes Region. The *Collaboration and Engagement* section identifies the mechanisms both within the department and with external government partners to coordinate oceans-related policies, programs and management decision making. Approaches for engaging, consulting and working with marine stakeholders are also described in this part of the Plan. Finally, an annex, entitled *Integrated Oceans Management Program Documents*, provides a list of DFO’s key reports and studies related to oceans and coastal management in the Maritimes Region.

The current document, *Implementation Priorities: 2014-2017*, identifies the priorities and actions being undertaken by DFO to advance its mandate for oceans and coastal management in the Maritimes Region. The actions listed in this document will be reviewed regularly to account for changing conditions and priorities, and to assess the effectiveness and relevance of the efforts. Progress will be communicated on a regular basis internally within DFO and externally with other government departments and stakeholders. The full Plan will also be reviewed after its first three years of implementation.

VISION

Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, sustainable communities and responsible use supported by effective management processes.

GOALS

The Plan responds to a set of over-arching goals and priorities for achieving integrated and ecosystem approaches to oceans and coastal management. The goals of the Plan include:

EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING: Timely access to accurate and validated information for decision making is a critical component of oceans and coastal management. Under the Plan, DFO is focussed on developing knowledge products and tools, providing validated and accurate information, and preparing area and issue-specific operational guidance for managers and decision makers both within and outside the department. Ensuring this information is readily available in a timely manner is equally important. These products will support the highest priority issues within the Maritimes Region as determined by expert knowledge, stakeholder input, and risk-based analysis. The development and accessibility of this type of information will support better decision making by all parties, including government, industry and the broader community.



ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT: DFO is pursuing an ecosystem approach to management for all aspects of its mandate. This reflects current scientific thought and international guidance and commitments. An ecosystem approach places the ecosystem at the forefront of consideration when managing those activities that affect it. By understanding thresholds and limits beyond which the system would be impacted, the activities are managed to maintain the ecosystem within its natural tolerances. All management measures advanced under the Plan will take an ecosystem approach.

SPATIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT: DFO supports a spatial and temporal approach to oceans and coastal planning and management. This involves the use of validated spatial data, maps and analytical methods for addressing human use and ecosystem interactions. A pragmatic and operational approach to the principles of marine and coastal spatial planning can provide effective, flexible and adaptive solutions for oceans and coastal management problems.

MARINE CONSERVATION: DFO is committed to effective marine conservation through the development of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the ongoing management of existing MPAs and conservation areas under the Plan. The department is also placing a priority on risk assessments and management guidance for the suite of Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) identified throughout the bioregion. In recognition of the need to balance comprehensive ecosystem protection with responsible development and use, DFO supports the careful selection of appropriate

conservation instruments, measures and tools to address regional needs and threats.

COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT: DFO supports a collaborative approach when addressing oceans and coastal issues in order to share resources and knowledge, seek advice and work together to advance common priorities. This is critical given the multiple jurisdictions present within the coastal and marine environments. A range of intergovernmental and stakeholder engagement, consultation and participatory methods are supported under the Plan.

DEPARTMENTAL ALIGNMENT: The Plan supports a coordinated and consistent approach to oceans and coastal management within DFO. A “whole of DFO” approach is important to ensure effective and coherent decision making. One of the aims of the Plan is to strengthen departmental management and decision making by responding with one voice on cross-cutting issues, such as offshore oil and gas, renewable energy development, marine transportation, or environmental incident preparedness and response. In addition, regular coordination and information sharing is required to ensure that departmental policies are well aligned and cohesive. Key examples of responsibilities requiring a cross-cutting departmental response include fisheries management and protection, aquaculture development, aquatic species at risk, marine conservation planning, and ecosystem science and research.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The 2014-17 implementation priorities under the Plan are focussed on four areas. Work in these areas relies on collaboration and engagement with other DFO sectors, other government departments, and external organizations and stakeholder groups.

1. *MPA Network Development.* This priority includes a range of activities to support the advancement of a bioregional MPA network over the next five years under Canada’s National Conservation Plan. These activities include mapping existing marine protection mechanisms, developing conservation objectives,



assessing other area-based conservation measures, analyzing validated data inputs and layers, developing a network design and action plan, and engaging stakeholders.

2. *MPA Establishment, Management and Monitoring.*

This priority is focussed on the ongoing and effective management of existing MPAs and Coral and Sponge Conservation Areas. It also responds to DFO’s responsibilities under the National Conservation Plan, including the designation of St. Anns Bank Area of Interest (AOI) as an MPA and the identification of potential AOIs in support of bioregional MPA objectives. The department will also focus on designing and managing effective monitoring frameworks to ensure conservation objectives are being achieved in each protected area.

3. *Environmental Preparedness and Response Planning.*

A risk and area-based approach to ship-source oil spill response planning is being supported under the Government of Canada’s World Class Tanker Safety System. DFO is contributing to the development of Area Response Plans for two priority areas in the Maritimes Region: (1) Saint John and the Bay of Fundy; and (2) Port Hawkesbury and eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. Key activities include the identification, analysis and provision of data and information on marine ecological, socio-economic and cultural sensitivities to inform effective preparedness and response planning. In addition to work related to tanker safety, DFO is contributing to spill preparedness and response for offshore oil and gas activities on the Scotian Shelf and deep water areas.

4. *Implementing Oceans and Coastal Management Measures Using a Risk-Based Approach.*

Where DFO has a mandate to act, management measures that address pressures in the marine environment are being pursued using a risk-based approach. This ensures that efforts are directed to the highest priority pressures based on a sound understanding of ocean and coastal ecosystems and the activities occurring within them. Issues related to interactions among different marine uses and interests are also captured through this approach. Specific activities may include the provision of spatial data and information products, development



of operational guidance documents, application of risk and management assessments, and identification of mitigation and management measures to address issues.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

DFO is undertaking a number of implementation activities to advance its priorities under the Plan. DFO’s commitments and actions for oceans and coastal management are clearly aligned and linked with the department’s mandate, authorities and responsibilities. Activities under the Plan also correspond directly to nationally defined outcomes and priorities for the Integrated Oceans Management Program.

The following table lists the specific actions to advance the goals and priorities of the Plan. In some cases, a single action may address more than one priority. The results of these actions will be monitored and updated on a regular basis as part of the department’s work planning and performance reporting process. Information on progress made through the actions will be also provided externally through interim reports and updates on the Plan, as well as during the full review of the Plan after its initial three years of implementation.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

MPA Network Development

Advance MPA network development, including finalizing strategic objectives, prioritizing conservation features, finalizing inventory of existing sites, agreeing on contributory sites, examining socio-economic considerations, and developing technical guidance on network design.

Finalize and validate data layers to be used in analysis, including both ecological (e.g., ceteceans, benthic features, EBSAs etc.) and human use (e.g., fisheries, shipping, and marine energy).

Undertake external engagement through the development of a consultation strategy and participation in various governmental, stakeholder and industry fora.

MPA Establishment, Management and Monitoring

Advance the regulatory process for St. Anns Bank AOI for designation as an MPA. Advance consultation process and develop an MPA Advisory Committee.

Renew five year Gully MPA management plan.

Hold Musquash and Gully MPA Advisory Committee meetings.

Promote knowledge and awareness of MPAs through education and outreach activities.

Ensure coordination among departmental sectors for spatial data management, analytical methods and product development for MPA planning and management.

Maintain ongoing monitoring and implementation reporting for MPAs and Sponge and Coral Conservation Areas.

Advance priorities under the Coral and Sponge Conservation Strategy for Eastern Canada.

Environmental Preparedness and Response Planning

Support risk-based response planning as part of Canada’s World Class Tanker Safety System, including the development of Area Response Plans for Saint John, New Brunswick and Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia and their approaches. This work is being done in partnership with the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada and Environment Canada.

Collate and provide departmental data and mapping products on ecological, economic, human use and cultural sensitivities and priorities for each Area Response Plan.

Develop response plan and protection strategies for the Musquash Estuary MPA.

Maintain and coordinate departmental program for environmental incident notifications, preparedness and response, including:

- Supporting lead agencies in responding to environmental incidents (e.g., Coast Guard, Environment Canada and Canada Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board), and
- Developing and applying risk assessment and decision-support tools for environmental response measures.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

Implementing Oceans and Coastal Management Measures Using a Risk-Based Approach

Apply risk-based approaches to determine priority ocean and coastal management issues and needs for departmental action.

Develop operational guidance and site profiles for priority bioregional EBSAs to inform planning, management and decision making.

Develop accessible knowledge products to provide validated and consistent information for departmental advisory and decision-making activities.

Liaise and track ocean use developments and coordinate departmental involvement in development and activity reviews, such as offshore oil and gas exploration and development, renewable energy, marine terminals and cable installations.

Maintain partnership arrangements for the State of the Gulf of Maine and State of the Scotian Shelf report series.

Participate in intergovernmental governance processes, including the Regional Committee on Coastal and Ocean Management (RCCOM) and associated mechanisms with Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

Participate in sub-regional ocean and coastal management initiatives, including:

- Gulf of Maine Council and working groups
- Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI)
- Southwest New Brunswick Marine Advisory Committee (MAC)
- Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Partnership (BOFEP)

Advance priorities under the Sustainable Fisheries Framework, including providing support for:

- implementation of the Sensitive Benthic Areas Policy
- development and maintenance of Integrated Fisheries Management Plans
- information and advice for the regional fisheries eco-certification processes



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