



BACKGROUND

FICHE D'INFORMATION

ABORIGINAL FISHERIES STRATEGY

Backgrounder I: The Program

The Aboriginal fisheries strategy forms the basis of a new "social contract" among government, Aboriginal people and non-Native fishing groups.

It aims to increase economic opportunities in Canadian fisheries for Aboriginal people while achieving predictability, stability and enhanced profitability for all participants.

Negotiated agreements with First Nations will cover a spectrum of fisheries management activities, including:

- conservation;
- enforcement;
- enhanced self-management of Aboriginal fishing;
- fish habitat improvement and fishery enhancement;
- research; and
- fisheries-related economic development and training.

The agreements are intended to establish cooperative mechanisms for fisheries management; meet the wish of Natives for enhanced participation in fisheries management; respond to the direction outlined in the Supreme Court Sparrow decision; and create structures to carry out the strategy.

The evolution and implementation of the strategy will involve full and open consultation with stakeholders, particularly recreational anglers and commercial fishermen.

In 1991 Aboriginal people became involved as never before in the development and management of fishery projects. Key parts of that activity will be extended within agreements negotiated for 1992 and future years. Funding will be provided to Native bands on the East and West Coasts and in the North to improve fish habitat and increase fish stock, construct or operate fish hatcheries, expand roles in fisheries enforcement, and undertake research and public awareness activities.

Working Agreements are being negotiated with individual bands, band councils, watershed groups and provincial associations. The agreements address fisheries management issues but do not define or limit Aboriginal rights. Working Agreements will lead to more comprehensive Interim Agreements.



The Aboriginal fisheries strategy is expected to cost about \$140 million over the initial seven years.

It is estimated that \$73.5 million will be spent from 1992 to 1997 for fisheries-based economic development, on-the-job training and Native participation in fisheries management activities.

Certain activities under the strategy also will be eligible for additional funding from other government programs. For instance some training is expected to qualify for support under Employment and Immigration's affirmative-action program for Natives, called Pathways.

A total of \$7 million is being made available for the retirement of commercial licences, primarily in the Pacific salmon fishery, in order to facilitate reallocation to Aboriginal groups.

Research will cost \$4 million and the cost of negotiating interim agreements, including funding for Native groups and third parties, will be \$11.5 million.

An estimated \$20 million would be transferred from DFO's present budget to Native groups to take over delivery of some services now provided by the department, such as the operation of some Salmonid Enhancement Program facilities and Small Craft Harbours.

Relationship to Economic Development

Aboriginal people in coastal provinces want to preserve and build their societies and economies. Fisheries were a component of almost all coastal Aboriginal economies and the cornerstones of many. Aboriginal communities are often located close to fisheries resources and fisheries present Natives with the opportunity to create employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Increased Aboriginal participation in fisheries can provide economic development and employment opportunities to improve the economies of Aboriginal communities. Native groups will begin to assume the cost of running their own fisheries programs. Projects funded through the Aboriginal fisheries strategy will assist Native groups in achieving a greater measure of independence.

The rationalization of the fishery has great economic significance beyond Aboriginal communities. Many other Canadian communities also have relied on this resource for economic opportunity over many generations. The Aboriginal fisheries strategy is designed to provide a stable, predictable, profitable fishery for the benefit of all Canadians.

A consultation process will continue to serve as the vehicle for discussion of future fisheries management changes.