

Response Statement - Spotted Wolffish

December 18, 2013

Common Name: Spotted Wolffish

Scientific Name: *Anarhichas minor*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Threatened

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The above assessment confirms the classification of the Spotted Wolffish which is already on Schedule 1, the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk*. This species will thus remain on the List as Threatened and activities will continue to be undertaken in a manner consistent with the purposes of, and according to the timelines identified in, the *Species at Risk Act*.

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: This species underwent strong declines from the late 1970s until the mid 1990s, but since then there has been some recovery over most of its Canadian range. This is indicated by both increases in abundance and area of occupancy. These increases parallel a reduction in bottom fisheries that had a high incidental catch of this species, as well as introduction of recovery measures including mandatory release. While these recent increases are encouraging, the species is still at low levels compared with the beginning of the research surveys.

Occurrence: Arctic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Other applicable legislation: Fisheries are managed and fish habitat is protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: Much progress has been made towards fulfilling recovery objectives outlined in the Recovery Strategy. Several aspects of wolffish life history have been studied including food and feeding, population structure, and effects of dissolved oxygen on growth. Distribution and abundance has been examined for all regions and large scale habitat associations have been described. The process of identifying critical habitat for Northern and Spotted Wolffish is ongoing. Bycatch was identified as a cause of human induced mortality of wolffish and mandatory release of Northern and Spotted Wolffish was implemented. A comprehensive education and outreach program has taught fishers safe handling and live release methods to increase post-capture survival of individuals. Stewardship and education activities are ongoing and have increased awareness of wolffish and their status. The "Report on the Progress of Implementation of the Recovery Strategy for Northern Wolffish (*Anarhichas denticulatus*) and Spotted Wolffish (*Anarhichas minor*), and Management Plan for Atlantic Wolffish (*Anarhichas lupus*) in Canada for the Period 2008-2013" which fulfills Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) commitment to report every five years on the progress of Recovery Strategy implementation was developed and posted in 2013. An updated version of the "Recovery Strategy for the Northern Wolffish and Spotted Wolffish Management Plan for the Atlantic Wolffish" is also being developed.