

Response Statement - Atlantic Cod, Laurentian North population

December 2, 2010

Common Name: Atlantic Cod, Laurentian North population

Scientific Name: *Gadus morhua*

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

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations with the governments of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Atlantic Cod, Laurentian North population, should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Endangered. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Atlantic Cod, Laurentian North population, to the Governor in Council upon completion of consultations.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: Populations in this designatable unit (DU) have declined 76-89% in the past 3 generations. The main cause of the decline in abundance was overfishing and there is no indication of recovery. This DU includes the cod management units 3Ps and 3Pn4RS. A limit reference point (LRP) has been estimated for the 3Pn4RS management unit. The abundance for this management unit has been relatively stable over the past decade, but it is well below the LRP, and directed fisheries continue. Abundance in southern Newfoundland (3Ps) is declining. The assessment indicates that this management unit is at the LRP, and directed fisheries continue.

Occurrence: Atlantic Ocean

Competent Minister(s):
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:
Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island

Applicable federal legislation:
Fisheries are managed and fish habitat is protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: Strong conservation measures are already in place for the Laurentian North population, including limits on bycatch in other fisheries and restrictions on commercial cod fishing in the 3Ps and 3Pn4RS fishing areas. In the Northern Gulf of St. Lawrence, due to serious concerns about the health of the cod stock, the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) was set at 4,000 tonnes for 2010. A portion of the TAC was allocated for sentinel fishery activities and recreational fisheries.

There was a moratorium on the fishery from 1994 to 1996. Since it was lifted in 1997, landings and TACs have ranged from 3,000 to 7,500 tonnes (except in 2003, when the fishery was closed again). This is currently the Northern Gulf's only cod stock where the directed fishery relies solely on fixed gear (i.e. longline, gillnet, handline, etc.). To protect cod broodstock, Division 4R offshore from St-Georges Bay and Port au Port Bay – a known spawning area – is closed to all groundfishing from April 1 to June 15. Directed cod fishing is also closed during the spawning season (May 15 to June 23).