

Response Statement - Atlantic Cod, Laurentian South population

December 2, 2010

Common Name: Atlantic Cod, Laurentian South 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 South 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 South 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 by 90% in the past 3 generations. The main cause of the rapid decline in abundance during the early 1990s was overfishing. Commercial fisheries were curtailed in 1993 and the abundance stabilized for a number of years. However, increased natural mortality and continued small catches have caused the abundance to decline again. Quantitative analysis of population demographic parameters indicate the population will continue to decline in the absence of fishing if the current elevated level of natural mortality persists. This DU includes the cod management units 4TVn (November – April), 4Vn (May – October) and 4VsW. A limit reference point (LRP) has been estimated for the 4TVn management unit and the current status is assessed to be well below the LRP. An LRP has not been estimated for the 4VsW management unit, however it is considered to be at a critically low level.

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: Atlantic cod is presently under moratorium in NAFO divisions 4T, 4V and 4W. No cod directed fisheries are permitted, with limited cod by-catch allowed in other, mainly flatfish, fisheries, limited recreational fisheries, limited food, social and ceremonial fisheries, and scientific monitoring surveys. Closures are also in place to all fishing in specific areas during certain times important to the conservation of cod (eg. during spawning). Dockside monitoring programs and at-sea observer coverage are in place for these fisheries. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans conducts annual research surveys to monitor trends in population abundance and biomass, directs fixed and mobile gear sentinel surveys and sampling of commercial landings to determine the catch-at-age structure of removals from the stocks, regularly examines cod condition and parasite load, and conducts tagging experiments to confirm seasonal cod movements, among other research activities.