

# Response Statement - Atlantic Cod, Southern population

*December 2, 2010*

**Common Name:** Atlantic Cod, Southern 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 New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Atlantic Cod, Southern 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, Southern 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 64% in the past 3 generations and the decline is continuous. Commercial fishing is ongoing and is an important contributor to the decline. As well, there is evidence of an unexplained increase in natural mortality in the 4X portion of the DU. Rescue from the US population is unlikely given the low abundance of the species in that area. This DU includes the cod management units 4X5Y and 5Zjm. There is a directed fishery for the species in the 4X5Y area, and although there is no limit reference point (LRP), recent fishery management advice indicates that this management unit is at a critically low level. There is also a directed fishery in the 5Zjm management unit and this fishery is co-managed with the United States.

**Occurrence:** Atlantic Ocean

**Competent Minister(s):**  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

**Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:**  
New Brunswick, Nova Scotia

**Applicable federal legislation:**

Fisheries are managed and fish habitat is protected under the Fisheries Act. Conservation activities underway: Atlantic Cod (Southern Population) is currently managed under the Fisheries Act. Conservation measures include the following fisheries management measures: increased observer coverage on the groundfish fleet in particular areas, annual reductions in the Canadian Cod quotas, the implementation of measures to reduce Cod bycatch, and closures to fishing in particular areas during specific times that are important for the conservation of Cod (during high Cod concentration times and spawning periods). In addition, DFO Science is undertaking research on the potential causes of the observed increased natural mortality in Atlantic cod, as well as the nature of Atlantic cod/seal interactions.