



## TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES



### Recommendation Summary

The Green Budget Coalition (GBC) commends the Government of Canada's commitment to amend the *Fisheries Act* and recommends that it complements this commitment with adequate funding for policies, programs and partnerships that will help protect, restore and sustain Canada's fisheries — and the rivers, lakes and oceans that support them — for generations to come.

We also welcome recent funding to update Integrated Fisheries Management Plans, develop rebuilding plans and implement the new catch monitoring policy. Given the importance of our commercial and recreational fisheries to Canadians, we recommend additional funds to further develop healthy, well-managed stocks.

As such, the GBC recommends that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) invest \$260 million over the next five years (2018-2023) in the following key areas:

#### 1) Fish Habitat Protection and Restoration

##### Investment Required:

For 2018/19:	\$30 million
For 2018 to 2023:	\$200 million (total)

#### 2) Rebuilding, Recovering and Sustainably Managing Fisheries

##### Investment Required:

For 2018/19:	\$12 million
For 2018 to 2023:	\$60 million (total)



## Background and Rationale: Why is this Important?

Canada boasts one of the most diverse and valuable commercial and recreational fisheries in the world, sourced from three oceans, the Great Lakes, a vast expanse of inland lakes and world famous rivers. These fisheries are economically important for middle class Canadians and Indigenous Peoples, both in terms of value and employment. The latest data shows that commercial fisheries provide an estimated gross value of over \$8.4 billion and recreational fisheries generate approximately \$7.5 billion for local economies annually. Approximately 72,000 Canadians make their living directly from commercial fishing and fishing-related activities, while over 3.2 million Canadians participate in recreation fishing each year.<sup>24</sup> Managing Canada’s fisheries sustainably and equitably is vital to the livelihoods of rural and Indigenous communities, our outdoor recreation and tourism industries, and the overall health of our oceans, lakes, and rivers.

Despite the economic and cultural importance of this natural resource, Canada’s fisheries face a number of significant challenges. For example, marine populations have declined by more than 50% since 1970 and nineteen stocks are listed in the critical zone of which only three have rebuilding plans. Many recreational fish species in Canada are either in decline or maintained primarily by stocking. Furthermore, DFO does not have a science-based reference point for 80 of the 154 major fish stocks. This makes assessments of their health and any related management decisions, relatively ineffective.<sup>25</sup> Unabated degradation and loss of habitat is also a serious problem, threatening the survival and health of freshwater and anadromous fish across the working landscapes of the country. To date, nearly 70% of total wetland area located in southern Canada have been lost or degraded. To effectively meet these challenges, the federal government needs to fill a number of resource and capacity gaps in areas related to fish habitat protection and restoration, the recovery of depleted fish stocks and marine species at risk, as well as evidence-based, adaptive and collaborative fisheries management. Filling these gaps will help to improve fish abundance and allow Canadians to reduce our dependence on depleted stocks and increase economic revenue and recreational opportunities from healthy fisheries.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans report on restoring lost protections under the Fisheries Act highlighted a number of needs for enhanced DFO capacity and new program areas. The 2009 report of the Commissioner on Environment and Sustainable Development on Protecting Fish Habitat highlighted several key capacity and program shortcomings that remain a problem almost ten years later. As the government moves to restore lost protections, budget allocations need to be in place to ensure mistakes of the past are not repeated in the renewed habitat protection program.

### GBC Feature Recommendations – Alignment with Political Priorities



#### Fisheries

Reducing GHG Emissions

Climate Resilience ✓

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples ✓

Meeting Public Expectations ✓

Healthy Waters ✓

Jobs for the Middle Class ✓

Improving Health & Wellbeing ✓

Protecting Nature & Wildlife ✓

Clean Growth & Innovation

Economic Growth for Rural & Remote Communities ✓

<sup>24</sup> Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Facts on Canadian Fisheries and Recreational Fishing.

<sup>25</sup> The Commissioner on Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) report on ‘Sustaining Canada’s Major Fish Stocks’, [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_cesd\\_201610\\_02\\_e\\_41672.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_201610_02_e_41672.html)

## Recommended Investments

The Green Budget Coalition recommends that the Government of Canada expand, and in some cases restore, funding support for effective fisheries management and implementation of the new *Fisheries Act* with an investment of \$260 million over five years. Specifically, the GBC recommends that DFO:



### **1. Invest \$200 million over five years in habitat protection & restoration to support, rebuild and sustain fisheries.**

Renewed protection of fish habitat under the *Fisheries Act* requires a complementary renewal of the fish habitat protection program. The overall goal of the program should be to restore past harm to fish habitat and prevent or compensate for future harm in order to ensure the economic and cultural values of our fisheries for future generations.

#### **Additional funding of \$20 million per year is required to:**

- Enhance the capacity and capability of the department to deliver high quality review and advice on authorizations and environmental assessments,
- Establish a public database of projects that cause harm to fish habitat,
- Invest in developing world class standard practice for common activities that impact fish and fish habitat,
- Create data tools such as habitat quality mapping and restoration opportunity mapping to support industry habitat compensation actions and public habitat conservation efforts,
- Establish and support program delivery partnerships with other governments and non-government organizations,
- Build new fish habitat protection program components to address cumulative effects, and
- Fill gaps in compliance monitoring and enforcement.

#### **In addition, funding of \$10 million in year 1, with an incremental increase of \$5 million per year over the remaining four years, is required to:**

- Fund partnerships to restore degraded or destroyed fish habitat across Canada,
- Establish regional habitat restoration priorities, and
- Increase the capacity of private and non-government organizations to deliver high quality fish habitat restoration projects.

This funding would represent a renewal and expansion of the existing Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program (RFCPP) that is scheduled to sunset in 2019. We recommend that priorities for the first year are to increase capacity of private and non-government organizations to receive both training and resources to plan and design projects that would then be funded in Year 2 - 5 of the program. As such, we also recommend that the first year begin



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at \$10 million and then be increased by \$5 million per year over the next four years for a total of \$100 million over five years. It takes both time and funds to develop good medium to larger scale projects that would have far larger benefits than many small projects .

The Green Budget Coalition commends the Government's recent announcement committing \$75 million over five years for the Coastal Restoration Fund under the Ocean Protection Plan. The GBC recommends that the fund support projects and partnerships for fisheries protection and watershed planning, restoration planning support to provinces, integrated coastal zone planning and monitoring and data collection.



## **2) Invest an additional \$60 million over five years to rebuild, recover and sustainably manage fisheries**

Fisheries must be rebuilt by establishing and implementing science-led conservation plans and rebuilding strategies, with targets and timelines for all depleted fish populations. This must be done through an overall ecosystem approach, and in consideration of regime changes caused by climate change, which also requires management staff and capacity. It will also require a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and to work with the provinces, territories, Indigenous Peoples as outlined in the mandate letter to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. Federal support is also needed to recover several listed marine species at risk and establish additional protections.

We welcome the approximately \$40 million over six years provided to the Department in Budget 2017 to update Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs), develop rebuilding plans and implement policies under the sustainable fisheries framework. We also welcome the \$5.8 million over four years allocated



towards implementing the new catch monitoring policy. This money is a crucial step forward to address the shortcomings addressed the Auditor General's report on Sustaining Canada's Major Fish Stocks. However, given the number of IFMPs and rebuilding plans to be developed and the critical importance of implementing the sustainable fisheries framework and corresponding policies, we recommend an additional \$60 million over 5 years given that our commercial and recreational fisheries are worth approximately \$16 billion a year to Canadians and could be worth more with considerably more with healthy, well-managed stocks.

**a) Rebuild Depleted Stocks** to avoid another major fisheries collapse. The GBC recommends that DFO invest \$9 million per year to restore DFO capacity and establish meaningful harvest control rules, precautionary reference points, and updated catch monitoring approaches for all stocks within five years. This should be done through an ecosystem approach by taking into account the impacts of climate change. Funding is also required for Canada to fulfill its obligation to provide accessible information annually about the state of the country's fisheries stocks, and the trends in these stocks. Additional funds are needed to implement existing and upcoming policies such as the sensitive benthic areas and bycatch policies. Furthermore, funds are needed to increase regular consultations with Indigenous Peoples on fisheries science, management and recovery.

**b) Recover marine species at risk.** Many species that are implicated in commercial fisheries (e.g., Atlantic cod, American plaice, redfish, porbeagle shark) are also currently within the listing process under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). These species require additional protections either through SARA listing or by implementing existing tools and policies. The GBC recommends that the DFO invest \$3 million a year to implement Canada's existing sustainable fisheries policies and specific measures for at-risk marine fish as a matter of priority through the Integrated Fisheries Management process and through the sustainable fisheries framework.



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