

## A Conservation Framework for the Marine Conservation Caucus

*The MCC believes that the privilege to fish carries with it the obligation to do so in a sustainable manner so as to address the needs of the ecosystem and future generations.*

The Marine Conservation Caucus (MCC) is a group of BC environmental groups dedicated to the conservation of fish. We are active on several consultative bodies with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) (e.g. North and South Coast Salmon Integrated Harvest Planning Committees, Groundfish Integrated Advisory Board, etc.), provide written recommendations on policy and meet regularly to provide updates on upcoming issues and areas of concern. The following details the conservation principles that the MCC advocates at these consultation tables and in its recommendations.

“Conservation” is defined as “the protection, maintenance and rehabilitation of native biota, their habitats and life-support systems, to ensure ecosystem sustainability and diversity.”<sup>1</sup>

Conservation requires that fisheries are managed to maintain “the intrinsic value of biological diversity and of the ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values of biological diversity and its components.”<sup>2</sup>

### 1) Ecosystem-Based Management

Fisheries management measures must ensure not only the conservation of target species, but also linkages between aquatic/terrestrial ecosystem components, such as food web structure, predator-prey relationships, habitat, and other biotic and abiotic interactions.<sup>3,4</sup>

The MCC believes that BC’s estuaries, nearshore, coastal, offshore and benthic habitats are fundamental to support forage fish, groundfish, salmonids, other pelagic animals, and the ecosystems they support. As such, they must be managed to mitigate or restrict activities that would otherwise degrade habitat.

Ecosystem-Based Management must ensure that:

- Marine and freshwater habitat is protected from destruction, degradation, pollution, and other significant impacts, including from fishing gear, that would threaten the health and viability of the ecosystem;

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<sup>1</sup> Olver *et al.*, Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> UN Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> UN FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Section 6.2.

<sup>4</sup> Arkema *et al.* 2006. Marine ecosystem-based management: From characterization to implementation. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 4: 525-532.

- Selective and environmentally safe fishing gear and practices are promoted;<sup>5</sup>
- Management measures do not jeopardize the persistence and resilience of stocks used by humans and other components of the ecosystem;
- Watersheds/Conservation Units are the fundamental units for the management of wild Pacific salmon and other freshwater fishes.<sup>6</sup>

## 2) Precautionary Principle

“The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and their environment.”<sup>7</sup>

## 3) Sustainable Fisheries Management

Environment, socio-economic and community health are interdependent.

“Plan, develop and manage fisheries in a manner that addresses the multiple needs and desires of societies, without jeopardizing the options for future generations to benefit from the full range of goods and services provided by marine ecosystems.”<sup>8</sup>

“Using, conserving, and enhancing the community’s resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.”<sup>9</sup>

Sustainable fisheries must be undertaken without diminishing the structure, processes and species in marine or freshwater food webs.

## 4) Good Governance

Good governance must be: accountable, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive, effective and efficient, follow the rules of law, participatory, and consensus oriented<sup>10</sup>. For fisheries management, good governance also must incorporate sound science and adaptive management.

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<sup>5</sup> UN FAO Code of Conduct Section 7.2.

<sup>6</sup> Canada’s Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon. 2005. Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

<sup>7</sup> UN FAO Code of Conduct Section 6.5.

<sup>8</sup> FAO Fisheries Department. The ecosystem approach to fisheries. FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries. No. 4, Suppl. 2. Rome, FAO. 2003. 112 p. page 14.

<sup>9</sup> CoA (Commonwealth of Australia). 1992. The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, AGPS, Canberra.

<sup>10</sup> UN ESCAP What is Good Governance?

<http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp>