



# DFO Perspectives on Co-Management

Presentation to the  
First Nation Fisheries Assembly

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## Context

- DFO has a broad mandate and collaboration with First Nations is critical to our management approach and meeting our collective goals and objectives (e.g. conservation, sustainable fisheries)
- There are legal and policy-based commitments to consult and work collaboratively with First Nations
- Co-management has a wide range of benefits:
  - Better, more-well informed decisions
  - Improved outcomes
  - Greater sense of ownership and accountability
  - Improved transparency
  - More capacity to address complex issues and challenges
- DFO and First Nations agree on the need for a more substantive role for First Nations in policy development, resource management and decision-making





## What is Co-Management?

- There is no single agreed-upon definition of “co-management”
- Generally refers to some level of sharing of authority and responsibility for resource management, including accountability for results, between DFO, First Nations and others.
- Co-Management comes in many forms and takes place at a different scales, for example:
  - High-level dialogue regarding policy and programs (e.g. DFO-FNFC)
  - Collaborative planning around marine-use, watersheds, fisheries (WSP)
  - Joint dialogue with First Nations regarding FSC allocations
  - Joint work around “operational” science and fisheries management activities
- Often described as a “process” rather than an “end-point”
  - No “one-size fits all” approach
- Co-management shares common features / elements with consultation but can provide for a more fundamental, ongoing relationship, increased roles and responsibilities for First Nations, etc.



## Moving toward Co-Management

- Advancing co-management and a greater role for First Nations is a strategic priority for DFO
  - Reflected in a number of policies, programs and initiatives (e.g. WSP, Oceans Action Plan, Fisheries Renewal, PICFI, etc.)
- DFO also has a range of programs aimed at building capacity and developing co-management approaches
  - AFS, AAROM, PICFI, Oceans Action Plan, etc. are all “tools” that we can use to support the evolution toward co-management and shared stewardship
- Need to balance high-level policy and planning work with tangible progress “on-the-ground”
  - Working collaboratively with First Nations and others to determine the overall vision, principles and priorities related to co-management
  - Improving existing consultation and advisory processes
  - Improving coordination and linkages between processes
  - Continuing to build capacity and establish new co-management processes that meet the needs of First Nations and DFO





## Key Considerations

- Building co-management is a collaborative venture
  - In order to be effective and sustainable, co-management processes and structures must jointly-developed between DFO and First Nations (and other interests in the case of Tier 3 processes)
- Governance is important
  - First Nations and DFO need to invest time and energy into establishing appropriate processes and mechanisms for representation to ensure we have effective engagement in co-management
  - Much of the work required rests at the Tier 1 level
- Importance of setting priorities
  - There is an enormous range of issues facing DFO and First Nations.
  - It will be important to set clear priorities for moving forward in a way that is manageable for all
- Relationships are essential
  - Trust and good working relationships are essential to building and sustaining co-management approaches



## Challenges and Opportunities

- This is challenging work and requires a long-term commitment
  - Will require considerable time, effort and resources on the part of DFO and First Nations
  - Need to balance longer-term visioning and planning with tangible progress
- Resource constraints will continue to be a challenge
  - Need to maximize existing resources and look at innovative ways to work together (technologies, minimize process duplications, etc.)
- Legal and jurisdictional context is an important driver
  - In some cases this will provide guidance but may also produce different or conflicting views between DFO and First Nations
- Despite many challenges, there is common ground
  - Goal is to build on what we have on common, address barriers (where possible) and focus on activities that will move us toward more effective collaboration
- Look forward to this week's discussion and moving forward on a number of fronts





*"Consultation is moot in the face of  
effective co-management..."*

- M. Duiven

