

Terms of Reference

National Science – Habitat Management Workshop Allowable Harm Assessments for Aquatic Species with Habitat-Related Threats

February 20-22, 2006
Novotel, Ottawa, ON

Chairpersons: Reva Berman and Mike Stoneman

Background

A national workshop between the Oceans/Habitat Management and Science sectors will take place February 20 – 22, 2006 to develop an approach to the assessment of allowable harm due to **habitat-related threats to aquatic species at risk (SAR)** and the ensuing synthesis of advice to regional Habitat Management practitioners.

The *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) contains prohibitions against killing, harming or harassing listed aquatic species at risk, damaging or destroying residence and destroying critical habitat. Prior to issuing a *Fisheries Act* Authorization that may affect aquatic species at risk, their residence or their critical habitat, SARA requires that the preconditions set out in section 73 of SARA are met.

The conditions in Subsection 73(3) include

- (a) all reasonable alternatives to the activity that would reduce the impact on the species have been considered and the best solution has been adopted;
- (b) all feasible measures will be taken to minimize the impact of the activity on the species or its critical habitat or the residences of its individuals; and
- (c) the activity will not jeopardize the survival or recovery of the species.

The function of an Allowable Harm Assessment (AHA) is to provide Science advice in support of paragraph 73(3)(c).

Allowable harm assessment (AHA) informs Habitat Management decision-making regarding the tolerance of aquatic SAR for human-induced harm. The same Science advice is key to fulfilling the requirements of SARA at many junctures, including: socio-economic analysis; listing decisions; the development of recovery plans; as well as permitting. This advice may take many forms, including the Recovery Potential Assessment (RPA), Allowable Harm Assessment (AHA), or Conservation Status Reports.

In order to avoid duplication of effort and promote national consistency, it is key that the process identified at the national workshop be based on advice that is universally applicable across all its applications, from informing socio-economic analyses and listing decisions to permitting.

Objectives

The workshop objectives are:

- To identify and peer review a national approach for AHA for species with habitat-related threats
- To develop principles guiding the provision of advice from Science to HM to inform decision-making with respect to referral reviews.

The workshop will generate a proceedings report summarizing the deliberations of the workshop attendees, and outlining the guiding principles for a national AHA approach and process. This will be published in the CSAS Proceedings Series.

There may be additional CSAS Research Document publications produced in relation with some of the Working papers presented at the workshop.

Location and Dates

Novotel Accor, Ottawa, Ontario, Feb 20 1:00pm – Feb 22 5:00 pm

Participants

Participants will include the workshop steering committee; and representatives of DFO Science Sector and FHM from the NCR and the Regions. The list of participants will not exceed a maximum of 35.

Timetable for FY 2006/07:

Draft proceedings will be circulated to participants for comments by mid-March, 2006 and a final proceedings document is expected to be submitted to CSAS for publication by the end of April, 2006.