

National Peer Review and Advisory Meeting to provide a DFO framework for evaluating the impact of fishing gears on benthic habitats and communities

March 22-24, 2006 *
Montreal, QC

Chair: Jake Rice

Background and Approach:

1. The main Working Paper for the meeting will be based on the US National Academy of Science report from 2002 and the ICES advice to the EU DG Fish and OSPAR (2000) on this topic (urls are, respectively, <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309083400/html/.html> and <http://www.ices.dk/pubs/crr/crr241/CRR241.PDF>. Both of these publications represent major reviews by large teams of experts, were themselves subjected to expert peer review, and considered highly credible treatments of the issue. The Working Paper will consist of a CONCISE summary / amalgamation of the *conclusions and advice* of two the major, independent expert reviews. It will also be informed by an additional recent review by FAO (Fisheries Technical Paper #472 – Impacts of Trawling and Scallop Dredging on Benthic Habitats and Communities) and the recently published Proceedings of the 2002 Symposium in Tampa (Benthic Habitats and Effects of Fishing; P.W. Barnes and J.P. Thomas, eds. American Fisheries Society Symposium 41; 2005)
2. Each Region has been invited to prepare a Working Paper on recent research done in the Region on trawl impacts on seafloor habitats, and/or what is known at present about the nature and distribution of benthic habits in the Region. This would NOT have to be original research viewed for the first time; rather the primary intent are concise summaries of what has been done in the Region, placed in the context of the overviews listed in 1). Some Regions have concluded that insufficient local information has been collected to warrant a Working Paper or that their regional information will be covered in another presentation.
3. The meeting will follow the standard CSAS NAP process, with DFO experts as regions choose to send them and a broad range of invited external participants. The invited experts will be selected for objectivity and credibility among peers and balanced across the diverse perspectives. The meeting will conduct a peer review of
 - a) The first Working Paper with regard to the question to "Is it a fair amalgamation/summary of the advice from the separate advisory documents".
 - b) The working papers from 2), with the nature of the review depending on how much information in the WP is new results and how much is results that have already been peer reviewed, and the extent to which the regional material provides additional background information for the context of this meeting.
4. Based on the information from 3a & b, the meeting will discuss and provide advice on the question: "Are there features of the Canadian benthic communities & habitats that are sufficiently different from the conditions considered in the National Academy and ICES reviews that conclusions of those two comprehensive, costly expert reviews would not be a reasonable science basis for management of activities (particularly fisheries) affecting Canadian areas. The default is we accept the existing expert advice unless there is sound reason not to.

Products :

1. A Science Advisory Document presenting the science basis for management of fishing gears and other activities affecting Canadian benthic habitats
2. One or more Research Documents, based on the WP in 1) and any other WPs prepared as part of 2)
3. A Proceedings Document