

Freshwater Institute

Co-management of Fisheries Resources

Fishery co-management is the basis of conservation and sustainable use of the fish and marine mammal resources in much of Arctic Canada. Co-management is a process that brings together local hunters and fishermen, government agencies and public management boards to share management responsibility for fishery resources. The key features of co-management include shared decision-making powers, projects at the local level, a high level of community involvement and an approach that all agree with. Open communication between Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) scientists and fishery managers, co-management boards and the users of the Arctic resources is the foundation of co-management efforts.

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and the interpreted results of scientific research are combined to provide the information required to manage local fisheries. Hunters know about how stocks of marine mammals and fish behave in their traditional fishing areas. This information strengthens the rigorous technical work carried out by DFO.

Arctic co-management results from the legislated Aboriginal land claims settlements of the 1980s and 1990s. The following co-management boards, established under land claims legislation, have appointees nominated by aboriginal organizations, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and other government agencies.

- The Fisheries Joint Management Committee was created for the Mackenzie Delta/Beaufort Sea area in 1984.
- The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board was established for the southern Mackenzie Delta area in 1992.
- The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board was established for the Eastern Arctic in 1993.
- The Sahtu Renewable Resources Board was created for the area around Great Bear Lake in 1994.

The co-management boards are the main instruments of fisheries management within settlement areas. They are partners with DFO. The co-management boards and DFO have defined responsibilities: the boards primarily for allocation and DFO primarily for ensuring conservation. The co-management boards also have other responsibilities, varying among land claim settlements, such as conducting harvest studies, identifying research requirements, reviewing research proposals and providing advice to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. DFO works closely with the co-management boards to implement its responsibilities under the land claims agreements, to manage the fisheries and to implement boards' decisions.

In addition, the Great Slave Lake Advisory Committee has been operating since 1973 outside of a land claim settlement. The future settlement of other land claims will create additional co-management boards and community-based management and monitoring are being advanced.

Despite differences in culture and language, DFO and the people of the land claim settlement areas have been successful in the co-management of Arctic aquatic resources. All share a common objective: the sustainable use of the Arctic fishery resources so that present and future generations can enjoy these traditional sources of food.

For more information on co-management of Arctic fishery resources, please contact the Freshwater Institute at 501 University Cr., Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N6; by phone at (204) 983-5000; or visit our regional website at:

www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/regions/CENTRAL/home-accueil_e.htm

