

FISHERIES COMPLIANCE SURVEY

FINAL REPORT

Conducted For:

Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Spring, 2005



Executive Summary

As part of the 2005 DFO Compliance Review and Modernization initiative, a survey of over 1000 persons involved with domestic commercial, recreational, and aboriginal fisheries as well as the general public was carried out in areas of Canada where DFO has fisheries management responsibilities. The survey sought to gather information from these DFO clients about compliance with fisheries management measures, in particular the reasons for non-compliance and means of improving compliance.

The survey revealed that fishers, and notably also non-fishers, rate compliance with fisheries regulations and other management measures as very important. There is a perception in all sectors, but especially among commercial fishers, that fisheries rules and regulations are being broken or ignored at least some of the time. Roughly three quarters of respondents indicate that they would take some action in response to being aware of a fisheries violation (most likely by contacting an authority or a tip line, and less commonly by contacting a community leader or confronting the individual). Respondents with greater levels of participation in fisheries-related education and training, as well as those who interacted more frequently with DFO Fishery Officers tended to be more aware of non-compliance and more willing to take direct action in response to observing non-compliance.

The survey revealed that Canadians generally feel that non-compliance is the result both of fishers acting rationally to maximize their immediate personal interests, and the result of conflicts between fisheries management rules and requirements, and social norms. The most widely supported reasons for non-compliance in all fishery sectors, however, can simply be stated as: “it is personally advantageous to do so.” Aboriginal fishers indicated that conflicts with social norms (in particular with family and community traditions) were a more significant reason for non-compliance than did respondents from other sectors. Respondents from all sectors also tended to believe that formal penalties resulting from being caught are more of a concern for violators than are social repercussions. There was generally little significant difference between regions in Canada in these overall perspectives.

Consistent with these views, was the response to the question of what one thing would make people more likely to follow fishery rules and regulations. Respondents most frequently suggested “improving or increasing enforcement or enforcement officers.” Respondents were quite like-minded across all sectors - 35% of commercial fishers, 37% of recreational fishers, 33% of aboriginals and 33% of non-fishers offered this solution. “Stiffer/harsher penalties and fines” was the next most common suggestion — cited by 24% of commercial fishers,

22% of non-fishers, 18% of aboriginals and 15% of recreational fishers. “More education about rules and regulations” was cited most by recreational fishers (23%), followed by non-fishers (17%), aboriginals (15%) and commercial fishers (5%). Other solutions, cited less frequently, included “enforcement of rules should be fair to everyone,” “having the same rules apply to everyone,” and “give fishers more say in making rules.”

In summary, the survey indicates that Canadians believe fisheries compliance depends on a combination of enforcement, penalties, education, and a general perception of the fairness of fishing rules. However, while many respondents recognize social factors and education in determining compliance, a greater number comparatively believe that compliance is predominantly shaped by rational factors or considerations, and place prime importance on deterrence through the presence of enforcement officers and administration of penalties.