

More views on the COSEWIC finding that four Atlantic cod populations are "endangered"

Written by Scott Parsons
Saturday, 08 May 2010 12:51

COSEWIC is proposing that four populations of Atlantic cod, including the Newfoundland and Labrador population, be designated as endangered. Reaction from the Nfld Union and the province as well as some individual fishermen has been swift and furious. The provincial government and the union representing the thousands of people who work in the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador [believe the assessment](#) is off the mark.

In an editorial * [For Cod's Sake](#) ", released subsequent to my online Editorial, The St. John's Telegram concluded that any decision should be based on the scientific facts. Comments on the Telegram editorial posted online range widely from challenging COSEWIC's conclusions to expressing fear that if cod were listed as "endangered" it would be impossible to get it off the list in future. Others agreed that action should be taken.

Meanwhile, in [a release from Dalhousie University](#) , Jeffrey Hutchings, the Dalhousie University biology professor who just stepped down as the chair of COSEWIC, observed: "Even with reduced catches since 1992, cod are at such historically low levels that they have gone beyond their tipping point. They may no longer be able to replace themselves in their ecosystem."

COSEWIC proposed in May 2003 that some cod populations should be deemed "threatened" or "endangered" . But at that time, the federal government rejected COSEWIC's recommendation to list the cod as endangered because of "socio-economic" concerns.

This is the same argument that the fishing industry and former Fisheries Minister Tom Siddon used to delay action in 1989 after DFO scientists had warned that the northern cod was in danger. Three years later in July 1992 Fisheries Minister John Crosbie was compelled to impose a moratorium on fishing northern cod. Moratoria spread to many other Atlantic groundfish stocks over the subsequent two years.

Eighteen years later it is time that the federal government faced the facts. The cod stocks have not recovered. If the government wishes to some day achieve sustainable fisheries, it should list the four cod populations as "endangered" and implement a full-scale recovery/action plan. Federal and provincial politicians and the fishing industry can no longer, in good conscience, justify continued inaction in the face of compelling evidence that the cod stocks truly are endangered.

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TAGS: Atlantic cod, cod, endangered, fisheries, sustainable, COSEWIC, Jeff Hutchings, Tom siddon, John Crosbie

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