

Canada a Renegade at ICCAT/Fails to Protect Porbeagles

Written by Administrator

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Following the recent ICCAT meeting Canada's porbeagle fishers get to continue hunting porbeagles despite their endangered status. Porbeagle sharks are considered by the IUCN as critically endangered in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean, and endangered in the Northwest Atlantic. The joint ICCAT-ICES assessment of porbeagle sharks in 2009 shows that a rebuilding of the population to MSY would take decades, even if all fisheries and bycatch of porbeagle are banned and fishing mortality is reduced to zero. At a meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in Istanbul, Turkey earlier this month, Canada was the only nation among 48 to defend porbeagle fishing and oppose a ban. Ironically the EU, long a pariah in the Northwest Atlantic for its overfishing of groundfish stocks in the NAFO area, won praise from environmental groups for taking a tough conservation stance on sharks, including porbeagles.

The EU, the only other fleet landing substantial amounts of porbeagle, took decisive action earlier this year to officially end fishing for this shark and at ICCAT, the EU proposed once again to end fishing throughout the Atlantic by asking Canada to get on board. But Canada refused to agree. The head of Canada's delegation at the ICCAT meeting, Faith Scattolon, defended Canada's actions saying they are protecting the options of Canadian fishermen. "For a particular community in Nova Scotia, in Sambro . . . this is an important part of their fishing enterprise," said Scattolon. "It gives them a sweep of fishing opportunities that from year to year may adjust depending on market conditions and price."

Have Canadian fisheries managers already forgotten the lessons of the Atlantic cod collapse? Failure to act decisively when the scientific advice indicated that such action was necessary contributed to hastening the collapse with a catastrophic loss of jobs.

TAGS: Sustainable, fisheries, overfishing, endangered, porbeagles, ICCAT, Canadian inaction, EU, Ecology Action Centre

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