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RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Evaluation of the Fisheries Protection Program and its Aquatic Invasive Species Component

Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Fisheries Protection Program (FPP) and its Aquatic Invasive Species component support the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's responsibility to protect fish and fish habitat. The FPP administers the fisheries protection provisions of the *Fisheries Act* and certain provisions of the *Species at Risk Act*. The Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) component of FPP aims to protect fish, fish habitat and fisheries by preventing the introduction, establishment and spread of aquatic invasive species into Canadian waters. Both FPP and its AIS component are led by the Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector; however, employees working under the Ecosystems and Oceans Science Sector deliver the majority of AIS activities.

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

Fisheries Protection Program – Key Findings

- The Fisheries Protection Program aligns with federal roles and responsibilities, and supports the Government of Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) priorities. The FPP fulfills an ongoing need to protect fish and fish habitat across Canada, because all projects near or in Canadian waters, from large-scale developments to small private docks, have an impact on proximal aquatic ecosystems.
- FPP's performance in the six DFO regions has been impacted by a substantial reduction (50%) in its workforce and the consolidation of DFO offices (from 63 offices into 16 offices). Regulatory review workload was found to be imbalanced within and among regions. Additional standards and guidelines are needed to continue to harmonize regulatory review across the country and to make it more efficient; the development of standards and guidelines has not advanced as anticipated due to the implementation of the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program; a contribution program, which has grown every year.
- Monitoring of projects remains a challenge for FPP. The implementation of a self-assessment tool that does not capture any data has exacerbated this challenge. A lack of oversight and monitoring, combined with the introduction of this tool, has increased the risk that the Department is not adequately safeguarding fish and fish habitat.
- The corporate governance structure of FPP functions well but there are challenges related to the integration of the Aquatic Invasive Species component within the Fisheries Protection Program (i.e., reporting challenges and a need to clarify roles and responsibilities of both the Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector and the Ecosystems and Oceans Science Sector).

Aquatic Invasive Species Component – Key Findings

- The Aquatic Invasive Species component is aligned with federal priorities and a broader strategy against AIS and partially responds to an ongoing need to prevent the introduction, establishment

and spread of AIS into Canadian waters. The AIS component has successfully prevented the introduction and establishment of Asian Carp, and controlled Sea Lamprey in the Great Lakes; however risk analyses and the presence of AIS in many parts of Canada demonstrate that freshwater and marine waters across Canada are also threatened.

- The economic and environmental damage that some AIS have caused and can cause far outweighs the cost of prevention. Once AIS are established, they can multiply and spread rapidly; and control measures can take many years to produce results. With the continued increase in international trade and travel, the threat of AIS introduction will continue to grow. This supports the need for AIS-related research, prevention and/or control activities across Canada.
- There is an opportunity to address AIS related issues on a broader scale across Canada; however, the current governance and funding model, and lack of clear national objectives restrict the AIS component from achieving an impact beyond the Great Lakes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector, develop a clear plan to ensure that the required standards and guidelines are developed and implemented.
2. It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector, ensure that there is adequate oversight and monitoring of projects taking place in or near water, to mitigate potential impacts on fish and fish habitat.
3. It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector, in collaboration with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Oceans Science Sector, identify clear national objectives for the AIS component, which are achievable based upon resource allocations, and a governance structure that ensures accountability for results.

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

This report presents the results of the evaluation of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Fisheries Protection Program and its Aquatic Invasive Species component. The evaluation also incorporates an assessment of the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program and an evaluation of the Asian Carp Initiative. In 2014-15, total spending on the FPP and its AIS component was \$60.9 million.

The evaluation covers the period from April 2010 to January 2016 and was conducted by DFO's Evaluation Directorate. This is the first evaluation of the Fisheries Protection Program. Aquatic Invasive Species was evaluated in 2008-09.

For more information about this evaluation and its findings, please consult the Evaluation of the Fisheries Protection Program and its Aquatic Invasive Species Component report, including the Management Action Plan accessible online at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ae-ve/evaluations-eng.htm>