

Badly needed science funds spent on another DFO junket- the FRCC groundfish study

Written by Gus Etchegary
Friday, 23 April 2010 21:50

Following is the text of a letter sent by Gus Etchegary to N&L media.

Dear Editor:

The Federal Minister of Fisheries, Mrs. Shea has mandated the FRCC to conduct an Examination of the Conditions and Considerations for a Sustainable Atlantic Canadian Ground Fisheries (Emphasis on Cod). There are nineteen members on the FRCC. They will hold meetings in 25 locations in the five Atlantic Provinces between April 6th and May 4th 2010. The Federal Minister has requested the FRCC develop a long term strategic approach to the sustainability of the Atlantic Groundfish fisheries and the conservation of the resource.

There are several questions one is prompted to ask the Minister in light of the extremely high cost of producing the information requested on our groundfisheries (Emphasis on Cod) in this latest mandate to the FRCC.

Firstly, it is disturbing to note that in 2004 the FRCC under the direction of experienced leadership and a group of high caliber personnel conducted a similar request from the DFO Minister with the emphasis on Cod and made a detailed report containing recommendations for its recovery and conservation. That 20 page document is available for all to read and to note that practically every one of those well-researched recommendations by the FRCC were ignored by DFO. Included in those recommendations was specific reference to the over population of seals and an estimate of the high mortality of cod due to its food requirement. It was remarkable but also disturbing to hear one of the FRCC members commenting on a radio broadcast this morning that "the over population of seals is a factor that must be dealt with" in regard to the rebuilding of the cod resource. This great pronouncement after eighteen years since the moratorium was declared against Canadian fishermen is a bit difficult to take!!!!. Especially so when 20 NAFO foreign nations continue to fish with impunity outside the 200 mile limit.

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To further illustrate the lack of coordination, dedication and leadership within DFO toward rebuilding of the groundfisheries one should be reminded of the much heralded "Cod Action Teams" that was established in conjunction with the Eastern Provinces in August, 2003. Three "Action" teams were established led by the Directors General of the Regions in the Maritimes, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. The Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador formed the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Action Team for Cod Rebuilding, led at the federal level by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and provincially by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA). This Action Team was mandated to develop a stock rebuilding and long-term management strategy for the four major cod stocks adjacent to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

On November 14, 2005, the Cod Rebuilding Strategy Report was presented to the Atlantic Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers (ACFAM) for their review. The ACFAM approved the release of the Report, noting that it represents an important step toward the rebuilding of Atlantic cod stocks, but that considerable work has yet to be done, including analysis of some of the recommendations and development of an implementation plan. What has been accomplished as result of these two investigations? Should the Minister now halt this present FRCC expensive process and thoroughly review the recommendations that have already been submitted?

As a result of an eighteen year moratorium, isn't it about time for the Government of Canada assumed its responsibility to rebuild the huge resource we delivered to Canada in 1949 which they have mismanaged in an such astonishing manner? Having lost 80,000 of its fishing population and about 25,000 direct and service jobs in this Provinces fishing industry as a result of documented Federal mismanagement isn't it about time the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans implemented measures to rebuild our fisheries?

Canada must take whatever steps are necessary to stop the foreign overfishing now taking place outside two hundred miles that continues through direct fishing or by-catches of cod, turbot, flounder and other groundfisheries. Implement Custodial Management which was committed to by the Prime Minister and former DFO

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Minister Hearn in pre-election speeches. Bring a halt to the infrastructure deterioration taking place, in recent years, in the DFO Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Centre at the White Hills and begin that process with the re-establishment of a credible fisheries science capacity since it is the most important element of a groundfish rebuilding strategy.

Gus Etchegary
Chairman
Fisheries Community Alliance.

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