

In Canada, the federal government has principal authority over oceans and their resources. Provincial and territorial governments have jurisdiction over shorelines, some marine areas, and many land-based activities. Aboriginal people are gaining greater control over specific resource management concerns in some regions, particularly in Nunavut and Inuvialuit.

Canada faces a number of challenges in addressing marine environment issues. The conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources remains a primary focus of oceans-related activity for Canada. Stock conservation problems, allocation conflicts between user groups, international transboundary disputes, excessive harvesting capacity, and fiscal restraint have combined to encourage the federal government to pursue a strategy to advance industry restructuring and to introduce changes to fisheries policies and management practices domestically and internationally in order to achieve the objective of an economically and environmentally sustainable fishing sector.

The prevalence of marine pollution from land and sea presents significant challenges for Canada and other oceans states. Most of the pollution load of the oceans, including municipal, industrial, and agricultural wastes and runoff, as well as atmospheric deposition, emanates from land-based activities and affects the most productive areas of the marine environment, including estuaries and nearshore coastal waters. These are likewise threatened by physical alteration of the coastal environment, including destruction of habitats of vital importance for ecosystem health.

Another challenge relates to the fact that while marine transportation represents an energy-efficient and, therefore, environmentally preferable means to transport goods, it brings with it environmental risks. Canada is committed to minimizing this risk, as evidenced by its ongoing efforts to improve the safety of marine navigation. For example, Canada is implementing a new navigational system known as the Differential Global Positioning System, which is widely heralded as state-of-the-art technology throughout the world.