

Fisheries and government in Canada

Canada's Constitution gives the federal government exclusive responsibility for the management of marine and inland fisheries. Over the years, some of these responsibilities have been delegated to provincial governments.

Today, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) manages fisheries directly in the four east coast provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, as well as the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory.

In Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the federal government has delegated management of the fisheries to the provinces.

In Quebec, management of all freshwater and some marine fisheries has also been delegated to the provincial government.

In British Columbia, the federal government manages marine and anadromous species (i.e. fish such as salmon which inhabit sea and freshwater at different phases of their lives). The provincial government manages freshwater species.

Throughout Canada, DFO is responsible for the inspection of fishery products traded beyond provincial borders.

DFO's responsibilities cover:

Fisheries management — this activity includes surveillance and management of stocks within Canada's 200-mile zone on both the east and west coasts, and the associated research and stock assessments needed to make decisions about the sharing of access to the stocks among Canadian and foreign fishing fleets.

Fisheries research — DFO operates nine fisheries and aquatic research centres throughout Canada. Studies at these centres cover biology, ecology, population dynamics, distribution and migrations of fish, marine mammal and shellfish studies and the forecasting of fish stock abundance. DFO also operates several fisheries and oceanographic research vessels.

Economic marketing and development — DFO also conducts programs which support the fishing industry in marketing, promoting and realizing full economic benefit from fish products. This work includes serving as a national centre for the collection, analysis and distribution of data and information on fish catches, production and trade.