

These pressures on the marine environment highlight the numerous and sometimes competing demands placed on the marine ecosystem. Many of the resulting environmental impacts are the result of unplanned and/or locally driven decisions that have been made without consideration of their wider environmental impacts. This illustrates a need to focus on integrated approaches to marine activities. For example, the multiple or conflicting use of coastal areas, including fishing, aquaculture, tourism, recreation, construction of human habitats, waste discharge, marine mining, and shipping, make the application and success of isolated approaches questionable. For users of the oceans resources to coexist and ensure the sustainability of the marine environment, integrated approaches to oceans activities management are critical.

Continuing efforts to reduce uncertainty is key in supporting the proper management of marine resources. For example, despite the remarkable progress made this century in understanding the dynamics of marine stocks and ecosystems, uncertainty about the current status and future trajectory of marine systems remains a major constraint to ensuring long-term sustainability of the fisheries. However, continuing improvements to our knowledge of oceans resources, including the dynamics of fished stocks and the effects of pollution in an ecosystem context, are an essential basis for resource conservation.

This monograph provides an overview of how Canada is responding to these challenges. It sets out some future directions that Canada sees for oceans issues.

THE OCEANS ACT AND THE OCEANS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A new Oceans Act came into force in January 1997. The Oceans Act represents a significant step toward establishing Canadian oceans jurisdiction and consolidating federal management of oceans and coasts. It entrenches an ecosystem approach to oceans management, based on the