



## **Fisheries Recovery Action Committee**

### **Press Release**

For immediate Release

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## **Poll indicates 9 out of 10 Atlantic Canadians want restrictions on dragging**

Nova Scotia's Ecology Action Centre, along with B.C.'s Living Ocean Society and Newfoundland's Fisheries Recovery Action Committee, released the results of a survey they commissioned on the level of support amongst Atlantic Canadians for restricting the use of dragging or trawling, a method of commercial fishing that involves pulling nets over the ocean floor. Seventy percent of respondents agreed that "there should be regulations that restrict where trawling can occur and the types of equipment used" and an additional 19% wanted "a complete ban on trawling."

"This is great news for those with decision making authority in fisheries. These results confirm that there is overwhelming public support for addressing the impacts of dragging and hence very strong support for the Minister to take action," states Mark Butler of the Ecology Action Centre.

In the last decade there has been a growing body of scientific research documenting that dragging damages and destroys marine life and fish habitat and the need to adopt more sustainable methods of fishing. The USA and Australia, have taken steps to reduce the impacts of dragging on marine life including the closure of almost a million square kilometers of seafloor to bottom trawling in Alaska.

"We knew that there was public support for change, as a result of conversations we've had with hundreds of Atlantic Canadians from all walks of life over the years, but even we were surprised to learn that nearly 90% of Atlantic Canadians were behind change," exclaims Fred Winsor of the Fisheries Recovery Action Committee in St. John's.

Corporate Research Associates conducted the survey for the Ecology Action Centre. They interviewed 1500 people from across Atlantic Canada during the period February 14<sup>th</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005. A sample of 1500 respondents would be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 2.5 percentage points in 95 out of 100 samples.

"Dragging also exists on the west coast, and we believe that the survey results would be similar in B.C. Living Oceans has identified 12 areas of the B.C. coast that should be protected as critical habitat from bottom trawling, but Fisheries and Oceans has been unresponsive," states Dorthea Hangaard of B.C.'s Living Oceans Society.

The survey breaks down the interviews by province, age and education. While the survey does not provide a breakdown by sector or profession, the Centre believes that a majority of fishermen would also support greater restrictions on dragging.

Ecology Action Centre's position is that the Government of Canada must recognize the impacts of dragger gear both on the ecosystem and fisheries and place nation-wide comprehensive restrictions on dragging everywhere. In particular, the EAC would like to see the Government, through a range of mechanisms, encourage the use of less destructive methods of fishing, such as bottom hook and line.

Scientists, fishermen, conservationists, and policy analysts from Canada, the United States and Europe will be discussing healthy and sustainable fisheries at a conference by the Fisheries Recovery Action Committee, the Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society in St. John's on April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. (See [www.ecologyaction.ca/marine](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/marine))

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