

Recommendations for the National Biodiversity Strategy

Focus on Aquatic Ecosystems and Species

Submitted February 9, 2024 in response to the “Milestone” Document



Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Conseil de conservation *du* Nouveau-Brunswick



Overview

Canadian ENGOs working in the aquatic ecosystem and species space have collaborated to review the Milestone document. Our review was conducted with a view towards ensuring that all government departments with jurisdiction over aquatic ecosystems are included in specific targets and actions. We see ourselves as implementing partners for the Targets and look forward to assisting in their achievement.

As currently drafted, there are relatively few specific actions within the Milestone document related to aquatic ecosystems. We urge relevant departments to consider our Target specific recommendations in the final National Biodiversity Strategy.

Finally, we support the cross-cutting actions proposed in the broader ENGO submission under the five themes proposed and have not reiterated them here.

Milestone Document: Importance of Aquatic Species and Ecosystems

- Aquatic ecosystems are hugely important in Canada. Canada has the longest coastline in the world, more than 2 million lakes and countless rivers. Nearly 9% of Canada's total land surface area is covered by freshwater and the marine environment, including territorial seas, inland seas and out to the 200 nautical mile limit comprises a total of ~7.1 million km².
- Canada is one of the few countries in the world with an ocean area bounded by three international ocean basins. Our efforts in international ocean governance should take into account connectivity between species and habitats.
- To ensure that Canada meets the goals and targets of the KMGBF, our NBSAP must have a strong focus on aquatic habitats and species.
- We appreciate the significant work that has been put into creating the Milestone document and the inclusion of some measures aquatic ecosystems and species under many of the targets, but we do not believe it goes far enough.

Milestone Document: General Comments

- We fully support the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous-led conservation as a critical component of achieving the goals and targets of the KMGBF within Canada.
- Successful aquatic biodiversity outcomes will require increased collaboration between Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and other federal departments, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Transport Canada (TC), Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN), Infrastructure Canada, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), in addition to Indigenous, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, among others. We do not see enough inclusion of the above-mentioned federal departments in key areas of the NBSAP.
- To address this, accountability mechanisms must be built into the mandates of all relevant federal government departments and funding streams.

Milestone Document: General Comments

- Leadership from DFO is critical to the success of Canada's implementation of KMGBF. We do not see this leadership reflected in the development of targets to date or to the degree that it will be needed to materially reach the goals and targets of the KMGBF.
- While Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) is the lead department for commitments under the KMGBF and more broadly the Convention on Biological Diversity, ECCC must share the responsibility and accountability with other government agencies.
- Support for Indigenous governance and leadership, in advancing and managing protected areas, restoring ecosystems, and ensuring that Indigenous rights are not undermined by allowing species and habitats to be degraded is considered foundational to meeting the target.
- Action on fisheries reconciliation is also critical to ensuring that Indigenous nations are able to take part in a sustainable economy.

General Comments

- While improvements have been made in legal and policy frameworks over the past decade, positive biodiversity outcomes for Canada's wetlands, rivers, lakes, coasts and seas necessitates dedicated implementation of these laws (for example, *Fisheries Act*, *Species At Risk Act*) and associated policies and regulations in order to meet the targets.
- Mainstreaming biodiversity protection and restoration, with clear evaluation protocols, accountability and enforcement mechanisms, is necessary to ensure that implementation of laws, regulations and policies meaningfully reduce freshwater and marine biodiversity loss by 2030.
- Decision-makers should be empowered and incentivised to take the critical actions required to safeguard aquatic habitat in the face of commercial and development pressures.

General Comments

- Where impacts of fisheries on biodiversity are included in the targets, the livelihoods of Indigenous nations and coastal communities must be considered.
- Healthy populations of commercially fished species and their associated ecosystems are crucial to the economies of many coastal communities.
- Climate change impacts on aquatic ecosystems need to be fully factored in when considering the challenges and opportunities of meeting relevant targets.
- Ocean temperatures are increasing and traditional species ranges are shifting. More needs to be done to practically address this within the context of community wellbeing and biodiversity protection.

Target by target recommendations

Target Recommendations

We have provided recommendations on Targets 1-21. Our collective expertise is focused on Targets 1-15. For Targets 16-21 we have noted specific, though not necessarily comprehensive, actions. We have also noted areas where we feel the Milestone document is lacking, or where the actions included are unlikely to help meet the target.

T1: Plan & Manage all Areas to Reduce Biodiversity Loss

Recommended Actions

1. **Advance Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in all bioregions** and within marine areas included in land claim agreements. Ensure MSP processes are integrated with protected area network planning, Ocean Protection Plan spatial initiatives and Strategic Environmental Assessment or Regional Assessment processes for offshore renewable energy as well as planning for green shipping corridors and other industries.
2. **Ensure that the goals, objectives and outputs of existing and future MSP processes are aligned with the KMGBF.** The overarching goal must be to halt and reverse nature loss and MSP outputs should explicitly support the implementation of related targets, including Target 3 (30% protection), Target 2 (restoration) and Target 4 (species at risk).
3. **Ensure that the foundation of MSP initiatives is the identification and conservation of key biodiversity features** in the planning region, building on existing classifications such as EBSAs, KBAs, IBAs, SARA critical habitat and provide adequate funding for Indigenous Nations to identify conservation priorities based on traditional knowledge.
4. **Carry out cumulative effects assessments that facilitate meaningful public participation and are informed by Indigenous knowledge, science, community/local knowledge and use the analysis to inform MSP, approvals and other regulatory processes, and funding.** This should be an interactive process. Set thresholds, based on the precautionary principle, for underwater noise and water quality in the planning regions. This should be integrated into the Ocean Noise Strategy prior to its finalization.
5. **Incentivise effective participation in MSP by Provinces and Territories and Indigenous nations through the development of funding agreements, either as part of, or in addendum to, existing Nature Agreements.** New or existing, oceans-related funding streams such as the Atlantic Fisheries Fund or Ocean Super Cluster should be contingent on biodiversity related commitments.
6. **Establish a national ocean database to support MSP processes,** building on existing initiatives such as the state of the ocean and human use reports or the GIS database used in the Northeast Newfoundland Slope Regional assessment process. This initiative should be supported by an inter-departmental aquatic ecosystems data taskforce to harmonize data management structures and GIS products across government departments.
7. **Submit Canada's EBSAs to the CBD Secretariat** for inclusion in the global database no later than COP16 in 2024.

T2:Restoration

Recommended Actions

1. **Renew and expand DFO's existing Coastal Restoration and Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Funds** to support the restoration of degraded or destroyed fish habitat in priority watersheds and for priority species, and the development and implementation of regional habitat restoration plans. Programs should include capacity building for Indigenous governments and non-governmental organizations to deliver high-quality fish-habitat restoration projects and progress towards program objectives should be tracked as part of the Domestic Biodiversity Monitoring Framework.
2. **Expand the Parks Canada Conservation and Restoration Program** to restore degraded terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal habitat within Canada's system of National Parks, National Marine Conservation Areas and National Historic Sites.
3. **Make federal funding for Infrastructure Canada projects conditional on the inclusion of effective habitat restoration or habitat banking** in these projects. This needs to be supported by the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation protocols for offsetting and habitat banking programs with offsets resulting in net positive outcomes for aquatic biodiversity in proximity to degraded habitat.
4. **Conduct a review** of current regulations and practices to identify and remove barriers to coastal and aquatic ecosystem restoration, and integrate restoration into the National Climate Adaptation Strategy.
5. **Complete mapping of carbon sequestering aquatic ecosystems**, including blue carbon and sediment carbon and integrate data into restoration priorities. (Federal government eel grass mapping is a current example, Blue Carbon Canada NSERC project should be used to inform federal databases).
6. **Set national linear and area-based targets for rivers and wetland restoration** in line with commitments made under the Freshwater Challenge.

T3: Conserve at least 30% of land, freshwater and ocean

Recommended Actions

- 1. Continue to advance areas on the path to 25% by 2025**, including finalization of all Project Finance for Permanence (PFPs) currently under negotiation no later than December 2024. Ensure that interim protections are in place and legal and regulatory processes are underway for final protection of PFP areas by 2025.
- 2. Identify areas and immediately begin the planning process for 30% by 2030**, taking a network approach, to ensure protected areas are ecologically representative and well connected.
- 3. Continue work to support co-governance with Indigenous peoples** and develop governance models for IPCAs.
- 4. Implement the MPA Protection Standard in all new protected areas.** This needs to be supported by finalizing NMCA regulations by 2024 that legally implement the standard and by identifying mechanisms to legally implement the standard for all other federal MPAs, particularly *Oceans Act* MPAs and National Wildlife Areas.
- 5. Ensure existing sites counted towards the targets, including OECMs, meet international and national standards and policies by 2030** by strengthening management and protection levels where necessary. This must include the development and adoption of management plans with robust monitoring provisions to measure and evaluate biodiversity outcomes and guide management.
- 6. Commit adequate and permanent funding for protected area management** with a focus on investments in coastal communities adjacent to
- 7. Pass Bill C-49 (Amendments to the Atlantic Offshore Accord Agreements) by June 2024**, to allow for surrendering or cancellation of oil and gas interests in areas protected prior to 2019.
- 8. Include coastal and freshwater conservation requirements, including the development of Ecologically Significant Areas (ESAs) enabled by s. 35.2 of the Fisheries Act , in relevant Nature Agreements and Climate Adaptation Plans** with provinces and Indigenous nations. Identify and begin establishment of 10 candidate ESAs by 2025.

T4 Species Recovery

Comment on Milestone Document

We recognize the interconnectedness between targets 4,5,9 and 10 on sustainable fisheries. As written, the actions proposed under this target in the Milestones document largely omit the marine environment. Given federal jurisdiction over the ocean, and the failure of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to make timely decisions on listing decisions for aquatic and marine species under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), we strongly recommend that Canada revisit its actions under this Target. Additionally, the Nature Agreements do not adequately include aquatic and marine environments so a new mechanism is needed to ensure that provinces and territories are supporting recovery of COSEWIC assessed or SARA listed species.

T4 Species Recovery

Recommended Actions

1. **By 2025, make all decisions for listing of aquatic species assessed by COSEWIC**, with those not listed under *SARA* requiring a rebuilding plan under Section 6 of the *Fisheries Act*. (see Appendix slide) .
2. **Close all timeline loopholes for *SARA* decision making** so that species are no longer in limbo as a result of delays, expired consultation timelines or failure to make timely decisions.
3. **Accelerate the completion and updating of recovery and action plans** of listed species, including measurable targets for all *SARA* listed aquatic species.
4. **Require *SARA* log book completion** on an annual basis, and ensure adequate science monitoring in fisheries that encounter *SARA* listed species.
5. **Ensure timely designation of critical habitat**, using *Fisheries Act* tools to protect this habitat where appropriate.
6. **Adopt and adhere to fisheries rebuilding plans for depleted commercially fished species** and develop a policy for conditions of reopening fisheries, with an immediate focus on forage fish. Rebuilding depleted species will directly inform Canada's performance for Target 5's headline indicator.
7. **Enable inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in assessments for depleted species**. Provide support for monitoring and data collection for Indigenous harvester programs, and use this information to better inform population assessments.

Appendix for Recommendation 1, T4.

- 133 populations of fishes and marine mammals (54 species) awaiting SARA listing decision
 - 7 cetaceans (Beluga, Bowhead, Grey, Narwhal, Northern Bottlenose, Orca, Sei)
 - 3 pinnipeds (Atlantic Walrus, Northern Fur Seal, Ringed Seal)
 - 8 elasmobranchs (Porbeagle, Basking, & Shortfin Mako sharks, North Pacific & Atlantic Spiny Dogfish, Smooth, Winter, & Thorny skates)
 - 17 marine fishes (including 4 salmon species, Roundnose Grenadier, Atlantic Cod, American Plaice, Lumpfish, Quillback Rockfish, Bacaccio, Cusk)
 - 19 freshwater fishes (including Lake and Atlantic Sturgeon, American Eel, Striped Bass, Lake Whitefish, River Darter, Silver Lamprey, Bering Cisco)
- 41% of these populations assessed as Endangered by COSEWIC, 29% as Special Concern, 30% as Threatened
- Mean wait time since COSEWIC assessment 7.6 ± 4.4 years with no decision for listing.

T5: Sustainable, Safe and Legal Harvesting and Trade of Wild Species

Comment on Milestone Document

Targets 4,5,9,8,10 and 11 are interlinked. T5 is arguably the most important in terms of fisheries impacts on biodiversity. We appreciate the efforts of DFO to develop an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) however, many of the existing policies of the Sustainable Fisheries Framework are not implemented or only partially implemented and the EAFM is far from being operationalized.

Much more specific actions should be included under this target, particularly given the known impacts of fisheries on bycatch species and sensitive habitats, and the risk of entanglements of marine mammals. Actions under Target 4 will impact the outcome of this target. Additionally, Canada needs to ensure that its mandate and input to international fisheries management are consistent with meeting relevant fisheries targets in the KMGBF.

We note that none of the fisheries related milestones reflect the role that international fisheries management has in implementing the KMGBF or how Canada's mandates at these fora will be informed by the KMGBF.

T5: Sustainable, Safe and Legal Harvesting and Trade of Wild Species

Recommended Actions

1. Ensure full implementation of all tools in the *Fisheries Act*. Legislative and policy tools, under the *Fisheries Act*, including those for resource management and those in the Sustainable Fisheries Framework, should be fully used in all fisheries management plans and measures. Specific and time bound actions include:

- Advance regulatory approval for Batch 2 of the major stock list under Section 6 of the *Fisheries Act* by June 2024.
- Take immediate action on implementing the recommendation of the Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) audit of the Fisheries Monitoring Policy, and implement the Bycatch Policy in at least three high risk fisheries (pelagic longline, Atlantic halibut and redfish).
- Ensure the 5 year review of the *Fisheries Act* includes an overview of biodiversity outcomes.
- Complete all rebuilding plans required for stocks in the critical zone under Section 6 no later than September 2024.
- Adopt a strong ecosystem-based fisheries management policy by June 2024 and ensure that this policy is accountable to relevant biodiversity targets.
- Prioritize precautionary quota setting for all forage fish species as part of implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management.

2. Ensure that all non-depleted species have stock statuses and exploitation rates that are clearly within sustainable levels. The headline indicator for Target 5 is “the proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels”. To achieve Canada’s Target 5 commitments, DFO must invest substantially in stock assessments and other science advice to inform both stock status evaluations and sustainable management decisions.

3. Implement the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management in a consistent and transparent manner across Canada’s fisheries. Advance a consistent ecosystem approach across fisheries management processes. Ensure that Canada’s EAFM is inclusive of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and includes measures consistent with international best practices (e.g., the use of ecosystem-based reference points, total catch indices, stock assessments informed by environmental and ecological information, valid predator prey models, and the development and implementation of regional environmental and ecological syntheses to inform EAFM priorities and decision-making and considerations of a changing environment).

4. Implement the recommendations from the UN FAO sub-committee on fisheries management.

T6: Invasive Alien Species

Recommended Actions

1. **Establish a DFO-Transport Canada working group to ensure cross-departmental implementation of aquatic invasive species target actions** and timelines with a particular focus on transfer of invasive species through shipping and ballast water exchange.
2. **Prioritize invasive species threats connected to other GBF targets**, with a particular focus on recovery and protection of species at risk and sensitive aquatic / marine ecosystems.
3. **Support and expand independent monitoring of estuaries and freshwater systems** to assess and address the impact of invasive species on wild fish habitat.
4. **Establish a collaborative aquatic invasive species action fund** to engage and build capacity for Indigenous and community groups, including angler groups, aquaculture facilities, and local dive clubs. Explore integrating data from apps such as iNaturalist and eOceans into government databases to collect diverse data and observations over time.
5. **Develop robust evaluation systems for aquatic invasive species programming** to ensure positive biodiversity outcomes.
6. **Fulfill commitment at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) to prevent containment breaches at open net pen finfish aquaculture sites** through cooperation with provinces and expansion of the Containment Management Protocol.

T7: Pollution

Comment on Milestone Document

The proposed actions to 2030 for this Target include better management of land based pollution to reduce impacts on freshwater ecosystems and reduction / removal of fishing gear as part of reducing plastic pollution. However actions should also include Transport Canada, particularly on the upcoming regulations on dumping as part of the Marine Protection Standard.

T7: Pollution

Recommended Actions

1. **Implement prohibitions on dumping in marine protected areas through regulations as soon as possible** by engaging the shipping industry and Transport Canada in the NBS process.
2. **Restrict shipping discharges in Canadian waters, including prohibitions on scrubber washwater and restrictions on greywater and sewage.** This can be achieved by amending the *Vessel Pollution and Dangerous Chemical Regulations*.
3. **Hold liable of corporate officers and directors in the shipping industry, including the cruise ship sector,** to take all reasonable care to prevent the corporation from causing or permitting unlawful discharges of contaminants into the marine environment.
4. **Address land-based sources of pollution by setting limits in regulation** for threshold amounts of approved contaminants, from any source (e.g., fish processing plant, sewage, stormwater drainage). This will require federal partnerships with provinces and municipalities.
5. **Develop incentive programs to support provinces and territories in identifying and addressing sources of pollution to aquatic habitats** within respective jurisdictions; as part of or in addendums to existing Nature Agreements.
6. **Align the Ocean Protection Plan with GBF Targets.** This must include setting Marine Environmental Quality Targets for water quality.
7. As offshore renewable energy advances, ensure adequate thresholds for marine pollution during installation and operation.

T8: Climate Change

Recommended Actions

- 1. Develop an Ocean Climate Action Plan by 2025:** Fully integrate existing ocean climate initiatives across all government departments including DFO, Transport Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. Integration should include the Emissions Reduction Framework, National Adaptation Strategy, place-based measures as well as full use of climate information and species vulnerability in fisheries management decisions.
- 2. Integrate Oceans into Canada's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement:** Ensure that an updated NDC includes more specifics on protection of carbon rich aquatic ecosystems.
- 3. Apply research outcomes:** For all federally funded research programs on ocean and climate, ensure policy outcomes that address findings of this research. (i.e. Blue Carbon Canada, Ocean Frontiers Institute).
- 4. Prioritize the protection of ecosystems and areas that contain high concentrations of blue carbon** and / or are important in mitigating impacts of storm surge and sea level rise.
- 5. Update the *Fisheries Act*:** At the five year review of the *Fisheries Act*, add “climate change” and “biodiversity” in Section 2.5, factors to be considered in decision-making.
- 6. Support the passage of Bill C-33, *Strengthening the Port System and Railway Safety Act*** that **mandates climate plans from Port Authorities** and prioritize protection of near-shore habitats, like eelgrass, that are both critical fish habitat and act as a carbon sink (including through the establishment of Ecologically Significant Areas under the *Fisheries Act*).
- 7. Address climate impacts on fish populations**, including through ecosystem based decision making and the use of vulnerability assessment tools at fishery and community levels. Consider emerging species as well as increased transboundary and international collaboration on assessing and managing species moving to new areas.
- 8. Maintain Canada's position for a moratorium on deep sea mining in National and International waters.** Furthermore, advocate for a moratorium to be established on deep sea mining in international waters through the adoption of a General Policy for the protection of biodiversity at the International Seabed Authority.
- 9. Engage oceans users in climate change mitigation efforts.**
- 10. Implement the recommendations of the FAO sub-committee on fisheries management.**

T9: Management of Wild Species

Recommended Actions

Actions under T 4,5,10 will help to meet this Target.

1. Involve fishing communities and inshore fishers (Indigenous and non Indigenous) in efforts to develop actions under this Target, and continue to inform these communities on the impacts of climate change on future fisheries in adjacent waters.
2. Ensure that there is an effective process of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into population assessments and management advice for all fisheries.
3. Increase support for harvesters in Indigenous communities: Work with Indigenous communities, particularly in Inuit Nunangat, so that Indigenous knowledge can be passed to younger generations, safe handling practices are ensured, and there is an understanding of marine mammal mortality related to hunting efforts.

T10: Sustainable management in key productive sectors: Fisheries

Comment on Milestone Document

- We recognize that actions under target 10 also support Target 4,5, 9, and 11 and urge Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensure that the actions relating to these targets are integrated and measurable.
- We are concerned that the specific milestone under this target states “ the strengthened integration of socio-economic considerations in decision making to ensure benefits are available to those who depend on the ecosystems supporting wild stocks”. It is because of an over dependence on socio economics that many of our fish populations are at low levels. Indeed the collapse of Northern cod in the 1990’s was because socio-economics were prioritized over other factors.
- We urge DFO to ensure that other factors in decisions are given equal weighting, including precaution, climate change, ecosystem based approaches and that rebuilding plans are not altered or fisheries resumed before a stock has reached the healthy zone. With a changing ocean, it is going to become increasingly difficult to rebuild stocks that have declined to critical levels.

T10: Sustainable management in key productive sectors: Fisheries

Recommended Actions

- 1. Mainstream NBS targets into existing fisheries and aquatic species management processes** by creating KMGBF guidance for all fisheries and aquatic ecosystem related decisions. Take action now by ensuring that fisheries management measures, including implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Framework, rebuilding plans and the national EAFM implementation plan are explicitly embedded in the National Biodiversity Plan. E
- 2. Ensure that the review of the *Fisheries Act* in June 2024 includes a biodiversity lens.**
- 3. Prioritize low impact fishing gear** and methods in all fisheries decisions.
- 4. Ensure broad based fisheries incentives are tied to improved outcomes for biodiversity:** Federal incentives, including funding programs for industry (i.e. Atlantic Fisheries Fund) should be tied to ecological approaches at regional and local scales and based on improved outcomes for aquatic ecosystems.
- 5. Align Canada's mandates for fisheries related international agreements and processes** (i.e. RFMOs, FAO, UNGA Sustainable Fisheries Resolutions) are aligned with the KMGBF targets relating to fisheries and biodiversity protection.
- 6. Support fishing communities** by continuing to advance fisheries reconciliation, implement owner operator provisions of the *Fisheries Act* and support inshore fisheries and livelihoods.

T11: Nature's contribution to People

Recommended Actions

- 1. Restore forage fish populations:** Advance ecosystem based management of fisheries, with a focus on forage fish to ensure sustainability of the base of the food chain. Apply the Policy for New Forage Fisheries to all existing forage fisheries, with proxy estimates for predator prey interactions. Use broad data including seabird health to better assess health of the marine ecosystem. Forage fish are often important recreational fisheries and as such support more than just commercial fisheries.
- 2. Support community detection programs for mammal parasites in all areas,** but with a focus on area where country food remains a significant part of community food security. (i.e. trichinosis detection in marine mammal populations in the Arctic).

T12: Access to Blue Spaces

Recommended Actions

1. **Work with coastal municipalities to develop public access targets** for urban waterfronts and blue spaces supported by action plans for protecting and expanding equitable access should be consistent with biodiversity protection.
2. **Incentivize municipalities to include blue space provisions** and meet equitable access targets through planning and development subsidies.
2. **Prioritize the establishment of accessible blue spaces** through existing and future Nature Agreements with Provinces and Territories.
4. **Issue tax credits to land- or lease-holders willing to provide public access to blue spaces.** This should include properties in coastal areas that are being purchased by private land trusts for contribution towards terrestrial protection targets.
5. **Incentivize active and public transit** routes and access to blue spaces.

T13: Access and benefit sharing of genetic resources

Recommended Actions

1. Ratify the High Seas Treaty: For the marine environment, this needs to be considered particularly with obligations under the new High Seas Treaty and necessity of companion legislation for marine genetic resources (MGR) in Canada. DSI and MGR issues are similar, and this work should proceed in tandem, with a view towards completion for a ratification date of BBNJ by June 2025.

T14: Integration of Biodiversity Values

Recommended Actions

1.Ensure robust strategic and regional environmental assessments: IAA related processes for marine activities, particularly with a view towards replacing offshore oil and gas production with renewable energy, should be aligned to this target. Revisions to the Atlantic Accord Acts (proposed in Bill C-49) can be applied to this target, particularly if there is adequate processes and engagement of communities. Outcomes of regional assessment processes should be clear and include community benefits and required conditions for mitigation of biodiversity impacts from renewable energy infrastructure.

T15: Business Role

Recommended Actions

- 1.Ensure strong standards for eco-certification of fisheries and aquaculture:** Certifications should require implementation of national policy at a minimum and incentivize even higher best practice standards that are linked to the GBF targets.
- 2.Limit international ownership of fisheries resources:** Canada's fisheries resources and supply chain are managed for the public good. Foreign ownership of these resources should not be permitted.
- 3.Mandate large aquaculture companies to include routine public disclosure of all operations impacting biodiversity** (e.g., sea lice, escapes, disease outbreak, benthic health); work with provincial regulators to standardize transparency requirements and rigorous reporting timelines across jurisdictions.
- 4. Vote against the adoption of a Mining Code at the International Seabed Authority,** as well as against the granting of any exploitation licences for mining companies seeking to mine the seabed, to avoid the poorly regulated mining of the international seabed.

T16: Sustainable Consumption

Recommended Actions

- 1.Support strong eco-certifications that include transparency and public accountability:** Canada should support eco-certification requirements that result not only in Canada's fisheries and aquaculture sectors meeting full implementation of domestic sustainable fisheries and aquaculture policies, but striving to be global leaders in transparency and sustainable practices.
- 2. Implement best practice seafood traceability and labelling:** More robust traceability and labelling regulations and policies are needed to support sustainable consumption by providing transparent and accurate information to buyers.

T17: Biosafety

Recommended Actions

1. **Ensure best practices are implemented throughout Canada's aquaculture industry:** Ensure all aquaculture efforts are held to 'best and safe practices regarding biotechnology in aquaculture and any potential impacts of transfer when species are raised in the ocean environment throughout Canada. In British Columbia this is enforced through the Pacific Aquaculture Regulations under the *Fisheries Act*. In the rest of Canada, provinces are currently manage aquaculture practices through conditions of licence.

T18: Subsidies

Recommended Actions

1. Full implementation of the [WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement](#), within Canada and across all fisheries. This should include public reporting on subsidy removal particularly for stocks that are overfished.

2. Ensure that any funding to the fishing sector or ocean technology sector is underpinned by KMGBF target achievement. This could include but is not limited to the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, funding provided by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Ocean Supercluster as examples.

T19: Financing

Recommended Actions

1. **Leverage processes including the Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) focus areas** to advance ecosystem and biodiversity protection.
2. **Require biodiversity related outcomes for all federal funding** for fisheries and Blue Economy development.
3. **Ensure that there is strong knowledge of biodiversity linkages and cross departmental mandate development** where Global Affairs Canada is the lead department on ocean related legal processes, (i.e via the High Seas Treaty implementation process and at the International Seabed Authority).
4. **Ensure inclusion of coastal and marine ecosystems in the distribution of international climate financing.**

T20:Capacity Building and Technology Transfer

Recommended Actions

1. **Increase capacity and support for Indigenous-led research**, as is being exemplified with new research partnerships in the reimagined Arctnet, partnerships as part of Ocean Tracking Network, Ocean Frontiers Institute, Ocean Networks Canada and Qannatiq as examples.
2. **Implement obligations under the High Seas Treaty Capacity Building and technology Transfer provisions**, once the treaty is in force. In advance, ensure that marine research opportunities are afforded to developing states in in partnership with Canadian researchers. Ensure that data is available for use domestically and internationally where relevant to transboundary management of the marine ecosystem.

T21: Data Availability & Knowledge Sharing

Recommended Actions

1. **Create a shared government database for aquatic information:** See T1 recommendation for all of government approach. Follow guidance and best practices for Indigenous knowledge, science and systems.
2. **Adjust *Privacy Act* requirements for the Rule of Five:** Data is not available for many fisheries as a result of the Rule of Five. This is damaging research partnerships, transparency and important obligations to biodiversity protection. The Rule of Five needs to be revisited with a view towards ensuring that fisheries data is available for analysis by all stakeholders and rights holders.
3. **Require public reporting on fish stock status and fish habitat:** Revise the *Fisheries Act* during the five year review, starting in June 2024, to require annual reporting to Parliament by DFO on the status of fish stocks under Section 6 of the Act and the state of fish habitat (% loss, % restored, % protected).