

CANADIAN

AQUATIC RESOURCES SECTION



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CANADIENNES

March 20, 2012

Hon. Keith Ashfield, Minister
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
200 Kent Street
13th Floor, Station 13E228
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6
Canada

Dear Minister Ashfield:

We are writing this letter on behalf of over 300 Canadian fisheries professionals who are members of the Canadian Aquatic Resources Section (CARS) of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) with mutual interest in fisheries and aquatic resources in Canada. The American Fisheries Society (AFS), with a membership of over 9,000 members, is the world's oldest and largest organization dedicated to strengthening the fisheries profession, advancing fisheries science, and conserving fisheries resources. Our membership includes academics, private and public sector professionals and scientists as well as those working in the not-for-profit sector and students. The Section was initiated in 1991 to provide a forum for discussion of Canadian aquatic resource issues and the future of the fisheries profession in Canada.

The Canadian Aquatic Resources Section wishes to express our concern over possible changes to the Federal Fisheries Act and associated policies. We agree that there is a need to improve the predictability, consistency and timeliness of review processes related to habitat management, but also believe that your government needs to fully consult with the Canadian public, as the government is the chief steward of the environment and habitat. Indeed, the environment (including fish habitat) is Canada's most valuable public asset. If we are to manage for sustainable fisheries, then we need to explicitly recognize fish habitat as the foundation of these fisheries as it is now in section 35(1) of the Federal Fisheries Act. The Federal Fisheries Act and associated habitat policy along with fish habitat management activities conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada are the envy of other jurisdictions around the globe. There certainly are opportunities for improving the delivery of fish habitat programming (e.g., as identified by the Auditor General), but we are light-years ahead of other jurisdictions and must continue to show leadership in habitat science and management.

The Federal Fisheries Act is perhaps the most significant Act protecting and conserving the fisheries and related habitat of fish in Canada. The Habitat Provisions in Section 35(1), are the foundation of modern management of fisheries in Canada and the clear protection and management of fish habitat is essential to sustainability of fisheries and

the aquatic environments where fish exist. Sustainable fish populations and their habitat are indicative of a healthy and clean environment for people as well. Healthy habitats provide not only opportunities for fish but are important to the social and economic wellbeing of Canadian society as a whole.

We believe that open dialogue is important in the matter of modernizing the language and intent of the Federal Fisheries Act and welcome the opportunity to improve the regulatory process and improving the intent of the Act which is to create sustainable fisheries and sustainable habitats for fish.

We would be pleased to provide assistance to the government and specifically to Fisheries and Oceans Canada to improve the regulatory process.



Dr. Steven J. Cooke, Canada Research Chair and Associate Professor
Biology Department and Institute of Environmental Science
Carleton University, Ottawa
CARS President



Jack G. Imhof, Director of Conservation Ecology
Trout Unlimited Canada
CARS President-Elect

cc.
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON, K1A 0A2