

September 17, 2012

France Pégeot
Senior Assistant Deputy Minister
Strategic Policy Sector
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E6



David
Suzuki
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Dear Ms. Pégeot:

On behalf of our organizations, we are writing to encourage Canadian support for science-based limits on threatened thorny skates at this week's annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). Specifically, we urge the Canadian NAFO delegation to work to secure a reduction in the NAFO skate total allowable catch (TAC) from 8,500 metric tons (t) to no more than the level suggested by the NAFO Scientific Council (4,700t), as a matter of priority.

We are seriously concerned about the status and management of thorny skate (*Amblyraja radiata*). This species has been classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as *Vulnerable* globally and *Critically Endangered* off the U.S. east coast, and has recently been designated a species of "special concern" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

The NAFO Scientific Council has demonstrated that:

- thorny skates have low resilience to fishing pressure due to low population growth rates
- the Division 3LNO population remains low despite years of reduced fishing mortality, and
- to promote recovery, 2013 skate catches should not exceed 4,700t in Division 3LNO.

As you may recall, NAFO Parties failed to heed similar skate advice at the 2011 annual meeting and instead pledged to adopt the Scientific Council recommendations in 2012.

As you know, Canada holds a significant share of the NAFO thorny skate TAC. Canada therefore has a key role in negotiating quota reduction as well as an important responsibility to work to ensure the sustainability of this vulnerable species. Moreover, adherence to scientific advice is integral to Canada's stated approach to fisheries management.

Ms. Pégeot
September 17, 2012
page 2

Setting the world's first Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) TAC for a shark or ray was a major accomplishment for NAFO, and yet we maintain that this limit must be in line with scientific advice in order to rebuild the population and set a sound precedent for other RFMOs. We are hopeful that, with your leadership, this important step can be taken this week.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sonja Fordham
President
Shark Advocates International



Robert Rangeley, Ph.D.
Vice President, Atlantic
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Scott Wallace
Sustainable Fisheries Analyst
David Suzuki Foundation



Susanna Fuller
Marine Conservation Coordinator
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