



David
Suzuki
Foundation



September 14, 2010

James Baird
Associate Regional Director
General Fisheries and Oceans Canada
P.O.Box 5667
St. John's, NL A1C 5X1

Dear Mr. Baird:

On behalf of our organizations, we are writing to encourage Canadian support for science-based limits on threatened thorny skates at this month'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 thorny skate total allowable catch (TAC) from 12,000 metric tons (t) to no more than the level recommended this year by the NAFO Scientific Council (5,000t).

We are seriously concerned about the status and management of thorny skate (*Amblyraja radiata*). This species has been classified by IUCN as *Vulnerable* globally and *Critically Endangered* off the U.S. east coast, and is scheduled to be reviewed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife (COSEWIC) within the next two years.

In the report from their June meeting, the NAFO Scientific Council notes that the region's thorny skate population is still at a low level and recommends "that catches in 2011 and 2012 should not exceed 5000 t (the average catch during the past three years) in NAFO Div. 3LNO" in order to promote recovery. The Scientific Council also highlights that "the life history characteristics of thorny skate result in low intrinsic rates of increase and are thought to lead to low resilience to fishing mortality."

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.

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 for it 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 next week in Halifax.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sonja Fordham
President
Shark Advocates International



Robert Rangeley, Ph.D.
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