

Overwhelming Support for High Seas Bottom Trawling Moratorium



In the 1990s, in Hecate Strait, British Columbia, scientists discovered four small areas that are home to ecosystems unlike any others on Earth: reefs of glass (hexactinellid) sponges. Trawling is devastating to these reefs.

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12 January 2006 - Halifax. A national poll released today jointly by Greenpeace and the Ecology Action Centre shows 78.3% of Canadians believe that Canada should reverse its current position on high seas bottom trawling and support a moratorium on the fishing practice in international waters - even if it may cost jobs.

"This is an overwhelming response to an extremely destructive fishing practice. In refusing to call for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling Geoff Regan and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are out of step with Canadians and are out of touch with the scientific evidence," said Bruce Cox, Executive Director of Greenpeace Canada. "Over 78% of Canadians and 1136 scientists say they support a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling. The question during this federal election is why doesn't Geoff Regan and the Canadian government?"



Trawled area in the Hecate Strait, British Columbia, where scientists discovered four small areas that are home to reefs of glass (hexactinellid) sponges.

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The United Kingdom, Mexico and Brazil are among some of the countries that currently support an international call for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling. Internal DFO documents indicate that Canada has actively worked on the international scene to oppose and undermine such a moratorium.

"In this poll Canadians have explicitly said they want the Canadian government to change their position and support a moratorium even if it were to cost jobs. Atlantic Canadians know all too well the devastating impacts of bottom trawling on the fisheries and communities," said Mark Butler of the Ecology Action Centre. "They know that in the long-term bottom trawling takes, not makes jobs and that's why they support immediate action on high seas bottom trawling."

A moratorium on high seas bottom trawling would allow scientists to study the seabed and determine which areas are sensitive and should be protected. Until such studies are undertaken the seabed is being destroyed before scientists have a chance to see what is there. The practise has been equated with blowing up Mars before we have a chance to even see what is there.

Bottom trawlers use weighted underwater nets up to 100 metres wide that are dragged along the sea floor. Huge chains or rollers attached to the front of the nets damage or destroy everything in its path, including highly sensitive cold water coral and sponge forests.

Both Greenpeace and the Ecology Action Centre are part of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition which is calling on the United Nations General Assembly to secure a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling.

For a copy of the survey results visit www.greenpeace.ca

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** These results are compiled from a Strategic Communications telephone poll conducted between December 27, 2005 and January 3, 2006. Interviews were conducted with 808 adult Canadian citizens (eligible voters), selected by the random-household sampling method proportional to actual regional populations. The overall results are considered accurate to within $\pm 3.4\%$, 19-times-in-20, of what they would have been had the entire Canadian adult population been polled.*