

# Pacific Seabird Group



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DEDICATED TO THE STUDY AND CONSERVATION OF PACIFIC SEABIRDS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

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November 9, 2001

The Honourable Herb Dhaliwal  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
200 Kent Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A 0E6

## **Re: Canadian National Plan to Reduce Incidental Take of Seabirds**

Dear Mr. Dhaliwal

The Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) has been following the development and implementation of the FAO International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA), and the development of a national plan in Canada. PSG is an international organization that was founded in 1972 to promote knowledge, study and conservation of Pacific seabirds. PSG draws its members from the rim of the entire Pacific Basin, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, and Russia. Among PSG's members are biologists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds, state and federal officials who manage seabird populations and refuges, and individuals with interests in marine conservation. Over the years we have advised and worked cooperatively with government agencies to further these interests. PSG is especially active with regard to seabird-fishery conflicts and oil spill restoration.

Canada was a leading nation in the development of the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries and was initially a leading nation for the establishment of the IPOA. It is with some concern, however, that we now feel it necessary to write to you regarding the status of Canadian actions.

It is our understanding that Canada has not yet completed its assessment of seabird bycatch in Canadian longline fisheries, even though there are indications that it could be an issue in some locations, at some times of the year, and for certain species. Until that assessment is completed it is not known whether a National Plan of Action (NPOA) is needed and what would be required

in a NPOA. We understand that beyond some initial training of fisheries observers, there are very limited programs in place to collect adequate data to fill in the large gaps that exist at present.

We are encouraged to hear, however, that your department officials are interested in conducting an assessment of seabird bycatch in other fishing gear at the same time. We feel that this would be beneficial to the whole process of reducing bycatch of non-target species, as recognized by the Code of Conduct For Responsible Fisheries. As you are aware there are many preventive and mitigative actions or modifications to fishing procedures that could reduce bycatch, and that this is the ultimate goal.

We look forward to hearing your response to our concerns, in particular, when Canada will conduct its assessment and what actions do you envision will be put in place to address potential seabird bycatch problems in Canada.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Harrison  
Vice Chair for Conservation