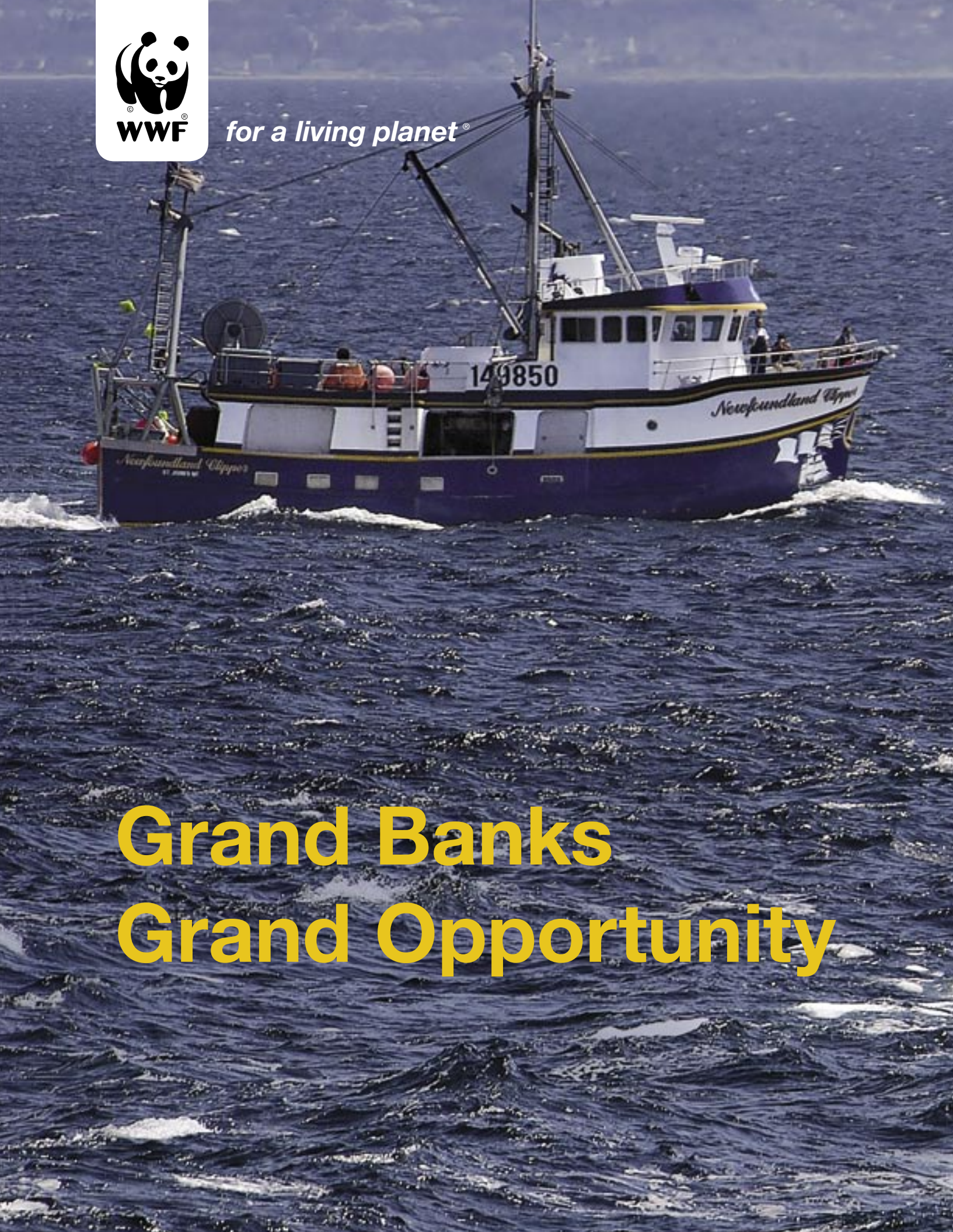


Next Steps

- In the coming year, WWF is pursuing the following:
- Confirm with key stakeholders realistic, science-based goals for the long-term recovery and sustainability of the Grand Banks.
 - Develop timelines and indicators to stop illegal bilge oil dumping, end IUU fishing and reduce bycatch, especially of species at risk.
 - Develop and test the most appropriate and applicable policy and legal mechanisms to implement conservation measures.
 - Investigate the socio-economic drivers contributing to overfishing in Canadian and international waters.



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If you want to help shape a vision for the Grand Banks, or want more information, get in touch with us:

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WWF ... for a living planet

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future where humans live in harmony with nature by:

Conserving the world's biological diversity;

Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable;

and

Promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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WWF-Canada wishes to thank the following generous supporters who make our marine conservation work on the Grand Banks possible

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The Grand Banks, once proud home to a robust Northern cod fishery, are now better known for what may be the largest ever fishery collapse.



A Brief History

For centuries, the cod stocks on the Grand Banks seemed inexhaustible. However, in the early 1990s, decades of domestic and foreign overfishing culminated in the collapse of cod and other ground fish stocks. The biological and socioeconomic impacts of this collapse have dramatically disrupted the Grand Banks ecosystem, the fishing industry and coastal communities.

In short, through increasingly powerful fishing technology, we have put incredible pressure on ocean resources. The remarkable thing is that this ecosystem might well recover, if we let it.

This is not a uniquely Canadian problem. Countries around the world have allowed fish stocks to be depleted because of poor fisheries management, illegal activities, a lack of international enforcement or a combination of all three. In the end, we all lose, especially those communities that rely on fishing for their livelihoods.

At WWF, some of our biggest conservation goals are tied to oceans, including the Northwest Atlantic Ecoregion. This region takes in the Scotian Shelf, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Gulf of Maine and the Grand Banks off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Grand Banks, once proud home to a robust cod fishery, is now better known for what may be the largest ever fishery collapse.

The collapse of cod and other groundfish stocks on the Grand Banks also signalled similar pending disasters in Canada and in other parts of the world. Staging a recovery on the Grand Banks would be an achievement of equal global significance, setting Canada and the countries that use the Grand Banks apart as leaders in marine conservation and oceans governance.

Despite the size of the collapse, recovery is still possible, because the Grand Banks ecosystem still retains its awesome productivity. Only by conserving and restoring the biological wealth of the Grand Banks will the cultures and the economies traditionally associated with this region be rebuilt for a sustainable future.

The road to sustainability and recovery

Species by species moratoria have failed to meet recovery objectives and in most cases have not halted the decline in groundfish populations. On their own, moratoria are insufficient management responses. Other pressures such as habitat loss, by-catch and illegal fishing must be addressed if we are to have any hope of recovery.

Just as the environmental decline has been unprecedented, so too must be the solutions. WWF believes that conservation goal setting, assessment, planning and action all need to be “scaled up.”



This approach must include the following key elements:

- **Long-range goals** goals that are tested through an adaptive management approach.
- **A combination of protection, management and restoration strategies** need to be employed together with zoning and best practices, to ensure a successful management regime.
- **New and coordinated institutional arrangements** reflecting such an ambitious conservation effort will require dramatically larger investment than is currently being made, and a recognition that no single law, agency or institution can succeed alone.

WWF’s call to action:

First and foremost, action needs to be taken now.

Collectively, our vision should be to recover the Grand Banks and ensure the sustainability of resource use. This would likely mean establishing a benchmark level of the health of the Grand Banks; for example returning to 1950s levels of production and species richness by 2050.

Science would suggest that this is a reasonable goal – though not something that will happen easily or overnight. While the Grand Banks was not pristine in 1950, it was then that changes in technology enabled industrial fishing to cause major depletions of stocks, species and habitats throughout the system. Furthermore, many additional industrial pressures have grown or been introduced since the 1950s, such as ship-source oil pollution, aquaculture and offshore oil and gas development.

Of course, this vision and goal does not come with a precise roadmap and a guarantee of success, but without concerted action, continued decline of the Grand Banks, and those communities with a historical dependence on the fisheries, is almost certain.

Opportunities to play a role in sustainability and recovery

The players:

Key players must come together to build and implement a common vision for recovery. This means partnerships involving conservation organizations, government, industry and local communities in Canada and overseas. This will require international cooperation, including multi-lateral organizations such as the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), European institutions and governments.

Pressures:

Fishing has been and continues to be the dominant activity, economic driver, and pressure on the species and habitats of the Grand Banks. Effects of fishing can be broken into three key categories and apply to the area both inside and outside Canada’s 200nm Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

- **Illegal, unregulated or unreported fishing (IUU):** This is a major problem in the high seas but is not confined to the area beyond Canada’s EEZ.
- **Bycatch:** This is a key concern for species at risk and depleted stocks. For example, several species of wolfish are now considered at risk in Atlantic Canada, despite never having experienced a directed fishery.
- **Unsustainable or unenforceable quotas:** Inside the EEZ, Canada often allows heavy fishing pressure despite large gaps in science. Outside of Canada’s EEZ, quotas are often too high and, even when set appropriately, quotas are often disregarded by ships that fish the Grand Banks.

Addressing overfishing isn’t the only opportunity for action. Critical habitat needed to support recovery is under threat from a number of sources, including:

- **Fishing gear** that disrupts seafloor habitat.

- **Bilge oil** illegally dumped by ships that kills approximately 300,000 seabirds every year off the coast of Newfoundland.

- **Offshore oil and gas development** including seismic exploration which has impacts on whales and larval fish; toxic effects from drilling muds; cuttings; and produced water.

- **Aquaculture** that can lead to genetic “pollution” from escapes; toxins that accumulate or magnify through food webs; and increased fishing pressure to feed aquaculture stocks.

Individuals and organizations involved in these activities also have a stake in the long-term health of the Grand Banks and must be involved in developing solutions.

Building momentum

The Grand Banks are a conservation priority for WWF, in Canada and internationally. For conservation efforts to succeed, broad cooperation and new partnerships in Canada, throughout Europe and beyond will be needed.

In Canada, WWF’s work will be led by conservation staff and members of its board who live and work in Atlantic Canada.

To date, WWF has:

- Engaged stakeholders such as potential partners in industry, government and local communities;
- Retained world-class legal expertise to help set an agenda for legal work in international waters;
- Commissioned research by leading experts focused on the challenges of recovery and sustainability.

