

In 2012 the Harper government passed legislation that drastically changes the federal Fisheries Act. The SCCA has received the following summary of how the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is advancing the New Sect 35 of the Fisheries Act.

The Sea to Sky Fisheries Roundtable has been pulling together people concerned about salmon and habitat issues, organizing meetings between concerned citizens and MP John Weston, and following up with local media to make sure the issues get covered.

For more information on Fisheries issues, visit the [Watershed Watch Salmon Society website](#).

As admitted by ADM of Transformation Swerdfager three months ago, DFO did not make their January 2, 2013 deadline for the new organization and all planned downsizing, new regulations, etc. The new organization is now scheduled to be fully in place on April 2, 2013.

Many staff have now left the DFO habitat organization. Some have taken jobs elsewhere in DFO such as in Small Craft Harbours but some are still waiting for an opening and others have taken a buy-out package or early retirement. Some are still hanging in there in hopes that plans will change.

DFO staff have generally been kept in the dark and heads of groups are left out of all downsizing matters.

DFO hired outside consultants to deal directly with the affected staff.

Staff who are still with DFO must make career decisions before March 31, 2013.

It appears that the salary allotment is inadequate for a new organization even with mainly new junior staff, so some positions will probably remain vacant.

Since most new staff position are at a junior level and veteran staff are refusing to take a giant downgrade and report to a new handpicked manager, many positions in BC and Winnipeg have not been staffed.

A new draft of the DFO Habitat Policy has been developed. it is much shorter than the past version - it should be - we have 80% less habitat and fish species to protect! DFO's Nic Winfield in Ottawa is in charge of the new policy.

DFO still appears not have defined 'permanent habitat destruction' or other new concepts introduced by the new Sect 35. If they have determined what these new concepts mean, they are not proceeding in a transparent manner.

New habitat policy and regulations are expected to become law by early July.

It does not appear that the new regulations will generate work for consultants as the majority of the work DFO used to do is not now required i.e. disruption or harm to habitat is now permitted in Canada's fish habitats even if they have fish in them!

No one in the Pacific Region seems to know where the government sits or what is doing with the Cohen report, which cost \$26M.