

**A new approach to seaweed management in Eastern Canada:
the case of *Ascophyllum nodosum***

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Abstract

Recent collapses of some important fisheries in Atlantic Canada have created a strong public concern regarding management policies for marine resources. Consequently, a precautionary approach has been urged for these resources. Previously marine plant management was either “laissez faire” or based only on single species resource sustainability. A new approach was applied to the management of the furoid *A. nodosum* (Rockweed) as this resource plays a role as a habitat for invertebrates and vertebrates. In 1995, under a four-year pilot plan, the *A. nodosum* harvest expanded from Nova Scotia to the unexploited area of southern New Brunswick. A new joint federal/provincial management strategy for Rockweed was implemented after reviewing existing biological information and 30 years of harvesting history and experience in Nova Scotia. Maximum exploitation rate, cutting height, gear restrictions, and protected areas were management measures within a precautionary pilot harvest plan. A research and monitoring program involving the industry, universities and the provincial and federal government was simultaneously initiated to evaluate the effect of the harvest on the resource and associated species and to provide information to improve the management of Rockweed. A scientific peer committee carried out a review of this information in April 1998 and 1999. The consensus was that the harvest impact on the habitat architecture was minimal and of short duration, therefore, it was advised to continue the harvest but to maintain the precautionary approach to management.

Note: Requests for the full paper can be addressed to the first author.