



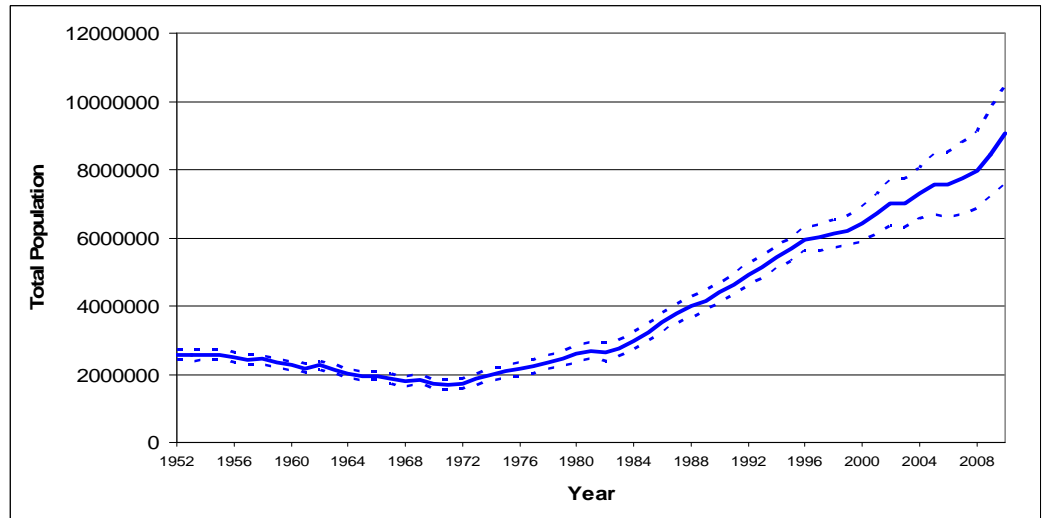
2011 Canadian Seal Harvest

...sustainable

The harp seal population in Canada has grown from less than 2 million in the early 1970s to approximately 9 million today.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is the federal department responsible for managing the seal harvest.

Estimates of total population for Northwest Atlantic harp seals for 1952-2010



Estimated harp seal population (dashed lines = 95% confidence limit)

Total allowable catches are determined annually according to the precautionary approach and are informed by the latest science advice (changes in reproductive rates, the effects of climate change, ice conditions, etc.).

We know that seals exist in a highly complex ecosystem. An individual harp seal can consume up to one ton of food each year (mostly fish and invertebrates) about half of which is consumed in southern Canadian waters.

Canadian scientists continue to study the relationship between harp seals and other species with which they interact, including certain species commercially harvested in Canada.

Precautionary approach:

The precautionary approach requires acting with caution in the absence of certain, reliable, or adequate scientific information, with the objective that a population remains above a pre-established scientific reference point.





...humane

The three-step process was developed and implemented based on the recommendations from the Independent Veterinarians Working Group.

... strictly regulated and enforced

In a 2008 court decision, a sealer was fined \$25,000 and was prohibited from participating in the first (and most lucrative) day of the 2009 harvest.

...economically and socially significant

"When there is a good seal harvest, it can account for up to 30% of my salary...Just in the Magdalen Islands there are 900 sealing licences. 900 licences mean 900 families."

Denis Longuépée, Sealer, Magdalen Islands, Quebec.

Sealers must follow a strict three-step process that is as humane – if not more so – than most other methods of dispatching wild or domesticated animals in the world. This process ensures that animals are killed quickly and humanely.

This three-step process is prescribed in Canada's Marine Mammal Regulations and applies to all sealers with commercial or personal use licenses. The Regulations also stipulate that only seals that have reached the age of self sufficiency are taken. It is illegal in Canada to harvest so-called "baby" seals, also known as whitecoats or bluebacks.

Canadian Fishery Officers closely monitor the hunt to ensure that the regulations and license conditions are followed. They do so with regular patrols and inspections at sea, on land and in the air, as well as with the help of independent, professional at-sea observers and information gathered from the public. Violations are taken very seriously and penalties can include fines, seizure of catches and/or equipment, and license suspensions.

A highly mobile enforcement team maintains a presence on the ice flows 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the sealing season, with the assistance of the Canadian Coast Guard and the support of local police forces.



In Canada's remote coastal and northern communities, sealing is an important part of the way of life and a much needed source of income for thousands of families. Beyond fur, seals are also used to produce meat products and oil products rich omega-3 fatty acids. The revenues generated from this activity are an integral and vital component of the annual income earned by sealers.



Know the facts; decide for yourself!

Canada 

