



Consultation and engagement on the potential addition of Lumpfish to the list of Wildlife Species at risk under the *Species at Risk Act*

The Government of Canada is engaging with Canadians on whether **Lumpfish** should be added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as threatened.

Please [fill out the online survey](#) by December 22, 2023.

Your opinion counts!

The *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) supports Canada's international commitments to conserve biological diversity by providing legal protection for wildlife species at risk of extinction or extirpation. SARA acknowledges that all Canadians have a role to play in the conservation of wildlife species.

Before deciding whether Lumpfish (*Cyclopterus lumpus*), will be added to Canada's List of Wildlife Species at Risk, we would like to receive your comments regarding the possible ecological, cultural and economic impacts of listing or not listing this species under SARA.

Adding a species to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk

The first step in the process to determine if a species should be listed under SARA is an assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). COSEWIC, an independent committee of experts, assesses the status of a species based on the best available scientific data, local ecological information and Indigenous knowledge. COSEWIC then assigns the species a designation based on its risk of disappearing in Canada (e.g., endangered, threatened, special concern).

Once the species is assessed, the Government of Canada decides if it will be added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. Engagement is an important step in the process to gather opinions on the potential impacts of protecting a species under SARA.

Facts about Lumpfish

Lumpfish is a thick, almost ball-shaped fish, with a suction disc on its underbelly. Body colour varies between shades of blue, blue-grey, olive or brown (Figure 1). Adult males adopt highly visible colours during the annual spawning season.

In Canadian waters, its distribution ranges from Davis Strait to Georges Bank and the Gulf of St. Lawrence (including its Estuary). This species is also found in Foxe Basin and has been reported in Hudson Bay and James Bay (Figure 2). Lumpfish are mostly found around the island of Newfoundland.

They occur from shallow coastal waters (<20 m) to depths of over 1,000 m and prefer water temperatures less than 5°C.

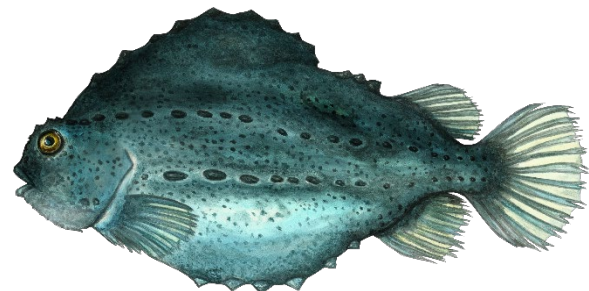


Figure 1. Female Lumpfish.

The age of sexual maturity in females is 4 to 7 years, at an average total length of 35 cm; males reach maturity at much smaller sizes and adult males are smaller than adult females. Adult females deposit a sticky mass of 100,000 eggs (on average) on rocky bottoms, with the largest females producing up to 400,000 eggs per spawning season. The maximum age of this species is estimated to be 13 years. Generation time is estimated to be 7 years.

Status designation of Lumpfish in Canadian waters

Lumpfish was assessed by COSEWIC in 2017 as threatened. Under SARA, a threatened species is defined as one that is likely to become endangered if threats are not addressed.

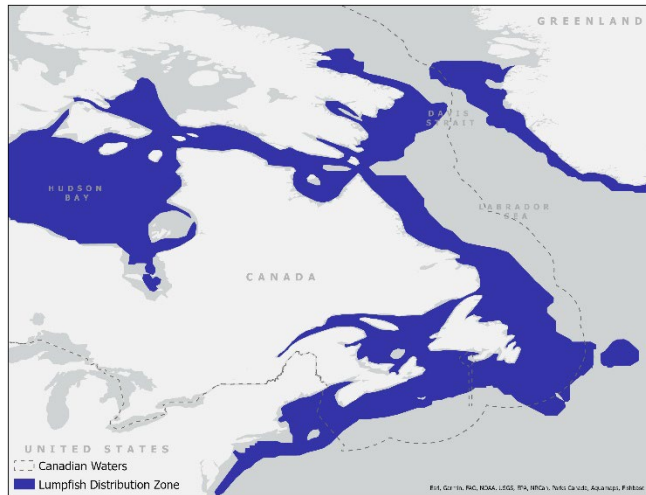


Figure 2. Lumpfish Northwest Atlantic distribution. Derived from AquaMaps hosted by FishBase ([Cyclopterus lumpus](https://www.fishbase.org/species/Cyclopterus_lumpus), Lumpfish: fisheries, bait ([fishbase.se](https://www.fishbase.org/species/Cyclopterus_lumpus))).

Why are Lumpfish assessed as threatened?

There has been severe declines in abundance of this species, as indicated in bottom trawl surveys over approximately two decades, as well as sharp declines in commercial landings since 2005. Commercial fishing (directed and bycatch) is a known threat to Lumpfish. Other potential threats include climate change, oil and gas activities, invasive species, infectious agents, aquaculture, coastal development and marine pollution.

What happens if Lumpfish are listed as a threatened species under the SARA?

If Lumpfish are listed as threatened, the prohibitions of SARA would immediately come into effect in Canadian waters. The prohibitions would mean that it would be illegal to kill, harm, harass, capture, possess, buy, sell, or trade Lumpfish. A recovery strategy and subsequent action plan(s) would be developed to identify measures to address threats and recover the population. Critical Habitat, which is the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of Lumpfish, would need to be identified, in a recovery strategy or action plan. Destruction of any part of the critical habitat would be prohibited unless authorized.

How would listing under SARA benefit Lumpfish?

Prohibitions and obligations implemented under SARA

would provide additional legal protection for this species in Canada and would trigger recovery planning in collaboration with key partners. There may be increased access to funding for scientific research and stewardship activities aimed at recovering Lumpfish.

How would listing Lumpfish impact fishing and aquaculture activities?

Indigenous Fisheries (Food, Social and Ceremonial and Moderate Livelihood)

There are several Indigenous fisheries where Lumpfish landings or interactions occur. If listed under SARA, Lumpfish could not be retained and would need to be released in a manner causing the least harm, unless an exemption is issued. Indigenous fisheries with the potential to interact with Lumpfish may be issued a permit or exemption if certain pre-conditions are met.

Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

Directed Lumpfish fisheries would be prohibited under SARA. Fishing activities with the potential to catch Lumpfish as bycatch would be reviewed to determine if they qualify for a SARA permit or exemption. If a permit or exemption is issued, non-directed fisheries could continue to operate. All Lumpfish caught as bycatch would be required to be returned to the water where caught and in a manner that causes the least possible harm.

Aquaculture

The breeding, sale and use of Lumpfish as cleaner fish could not continue. It would not be possible to permit a directed fishery for broodstock.

Please [fill out the survey](#) by December 22, 2023.

Related links

- [COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report \(2017\)](#)
- [Recovery Potential Assessment for Lumpfish](#)

For more information please contact:

Species at Risk Program, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
PO Box 5667, St. John's, NL A1C 5X1

DFO.SARANL-LEPTNL.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

