

# Canada senate committee endorses seal cull

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A harp seal pup lies on an ice floe in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in 2008. Canadian senators on Tuesday endorsed a plan to cull 70,000 grey seals in the southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence in an effort to preserve groundfish stocks.

Canadian senators on Tuesday endorsed a plan to cull 70,000 grey seals in the southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence in an effort to preserve groundfish stocks.

The Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans called for the "targeted removal" of grey seals whose hefty appetite for cod, they say, is preventing the recovery of the cod fishery.

"After hearing from more than 40 witnesses representing diverse viewpoints on seal management, the committee is persuaded that seal predation is preventing the recovery of groundfish stocks" in the region, said Senator Fabian Manning, chair of the committee.

"This is the best course of action under the circumstances to enable a healthy cod fishery and the continuation of vibrant and prosperous [coastal communities](#) in Atlantic Canada and Quebec," Manning said.

Critics say that in this multi-species ecosystem one cannot count on a reduction in seals having a positive impact on cod stocks.

The committee itself acknowledged that more research is needed to determine the percentage of cod in a seal's diet, and how far they will swim to feed.

What is more, even supporters of the cull note that the market collapsed for seal meat and pelts after the European Union in 2010 banned seal products from Canada.

According to government figures, the total population of grey [seals](#) in eastern Canada increased from about 13,000 animals in 1960 to between 330,000 and 410,000 animals in 2010.

In the southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence, the grey [seal population](#) reached a record 104,000 animals during the same period.

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