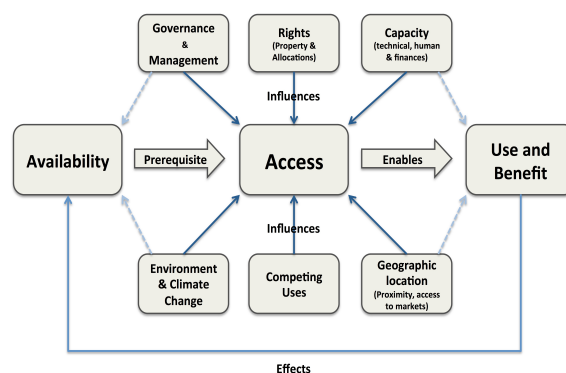


Maintaining coastal and Indigenous community access to marine resources and the ocean in Canada

Background

The ability to use and benefit from marine resources (including fisheries) and areas of the ocean or coast is central to the sustainability of coastal communities. In Canada, however, access to marine resources and spaces is a significant and growing issue for many coastal and Indigenous communities due to an increasingly busy ocean: ocean-related development, competition over fisheries and marine resources, and marine planning and conservation activities that confine activities to certain areas. Loss of access has implications for the well-being, including economic, social, cultural, health, and political considerations, and persistence of coastal and Indigenous communities across the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic coasts of Canada. The vibrancy and continuity of these communities is important to Canadian society for many reasons, including identity, autonomy, sovereignty, culture, healthy rural-urban dynamics, and environmental sustainability. A group representing academics, Indigenous peoples, fishers, and NGOs met in June 2017 to discuss, summarize, and recommend actions related to issues of access. We recently published a policy perspective paper urging that access for coastal and Indigenous communities should be a priority consideration in all policies and decision-making processes related to fisheries and the ocean in Canada. Greater attention is needed to the various factors that support or undermine the ability of coastal and Indigenous communities to access and benefit from the ocean and how to reverse the current trend to ensure that coastal and Indigenous communities thrive in the future.



Factors that can support or undermine the ability of coastal and Indigenous communities to access, use and benefit from available marine resources and the ocean.

KEY MESSAGES

Access to marine resources and the ocean is important for the well-being of coastal populations. In Canada, the ability of many coastal and Indigenous communities to access and benefit from the ocean is a growing issue. Access for coastal and Indigenous communities should be a priority consideration in all policies and decision-making processes related to fisheries and the ocean in Canada. Taking action now could reverse the current trend and ensure that coastal and Indigenous communities thrive in the future.



Access to marine resources and the ocean is central to the well-being of coastal and Indigenous communities in Canada

Recommended actions include:

1. Ensuring access is proactively and transparently considered in all fisheries and ocean-related decisions.
2. Supporting policy-relevant research on access issues to fill knowledge gaps and enable effective policy and management responses.
3. Making data publicly available and accessible and including communities in decision-making processes that grant or restrict access to adjacent marine resources and spaces.
4. Ensuring updated laws, policies and planning processes explicitly incorporate access considerations.
5. Identifying and taking priority actions now to maintain and increase access, when appropriate and sustainable, for coastal and Indigenous communities.

****For more information, refer to the related publication: Bennett NJ et al. 2018. Coastal and Indigenous community access to marine resources and the ocean: A policy imperative for Canada. Marine Policy 87:186–193. Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X17306413>**

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