

Pacific Urchin Harvesters Association



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Bi-Annual General Meeting 2002

BI-ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

RICHMON INN

APRIL 16, 2002

ATTENDEES

ROSS MORRIS MIKE FEATHERSTONE DARIN MACEY

DIMITRI TZOTZOS DON CHRISTIAN JAMES MAHON

GREG LOISELLE PETER CODLING CHRIS MACHAT

EDWARD IZYKOWSKI DARRELL CAMPBELL GARY GRANT

KEN RIDGWAY SR. KEN RIDGWAY JR. DAVID MCRAE

BOB HEGEDOS CHRIS KOBUYSHI ANDY WEBSTER

DAVID LANSDOWNE CHARLES GREAVES GEORGE DENNIS

HERB WATSON JOHN PARKIN PETER CHOI

STEVE ABERNATH FRANCIS CHEUNG JEFF KENNELA

SUNG KIM MARION CAMPBELL PADDY WONG
LARRY DUGAN

Meeting commenced at 10:30 a.m.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT—mike featherstone 3 goals and objectives

Sustainability – Sustainability of the fishery depends on combining good science with good fishing management. PUHA has committed 100's of thousands of dollars to biomass surveys, experimental research and enhancement, collecting information that DFO has identified as critical to sustainable management of the fishery and setting aside large areas of the fishery for this experimental research, before M.P.A.'s were a buzz word for conservationists.

Of concern is the fact that DFO has problems analyzing and publishing the information PUHA has collected. In the recent PSARC paper, the 5th recommendation is that "further research is required to understand age, growth, mortality and recruitment...", our goal is to complete work on the 5 years of information that is sitting in Alan Campbell's office that would provide us with a better understanding. First, by writing the Minister and his special assistant, and working with DFO and Indian Bands to source funds to complete this work. This year PUHA will reduce the number of surveys and allow more time for DFO to catch up on the backlog of already collected data.

In this 2002/2003-draft management plan, PUHA has identified sea otters as the biggest threat to sustainability of our Industry.

Maximizing economic returns – PUHA has developed the fishery to harvest the best product at the best time based on history and fishermen's knowledge. This makes sense from an economic point of view, but is also covered under the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing, which also outlines goals of reducing waste and better utilization of the product after harvesting. Two years ago PUHA in co-operation with DFO and the Processors lowered the harvest size to better meet market demands.

Presently, PUHA is working closely with the processors to understand the market and develop other products from underutilized low-grade uni. PUHA has participated in Producer's dinners sponsored by the Salmon Marketing Council, where industry spokesmen meet with the press and discuss the products and the industry in the hopes of encouraging more local use by chefs in high-end restaurants. PUHA has been asked to provide red sea urchins for the Brussels Seafood show this month as a feature B. C. product. All our freight and costs will be covered. I am also attending the show on personal business and have put together a brochure to promote the industry. I have also attended meetings with Agri-Food Canada, with the Alliance to discuss potential funding for seafood promotions into other markets.

Co-operating with Communities – PUHA has offered to work with the Haida Abalone rebuilding strategy by combining our knowledge and base information and working within the existing closed experimental area to conduct abalone rebuilding experiments. PUHA continues to work with communities on biomass surveys and on the experimental research areas.

[SOUTH COAST REPORT--ken ridgway](#)

The season has been relatively good. There has been confusion over the lottery system. The processors have concerns about the water loss. There are concerns regarding the quota at Campbell River, Blind Channel and Cape Scott. The biggest problem throughout the season has been the abundance of sea otters.

[NORTH COAST REPORT---herb watson](#)

The season has been good and we are going through the areas quickly and efficiently. The main problem has been split quota's, which seemed to have covered the area twice. September 11th did affect the North Coast significantly.

[D. & D. REPORT---darin macey](#)

The North Coast opened July 1st, but fishing did not commence until September 11th, due to soft market conditions. Unfortunately, immediately after the fleet commenced fishing, the tragedy in New York forced a shut down as transportation to Japan was halted. The fleet didn't start up again until September 25th, skipping the QCI opening sequence #1 to #11 and started on the mainland.

The unfortunate effect felt internationally as a result of the tragedy, combined with an existing unstable market in Japan, had set catch levels far behind previous seasons. PUHA and its members worked together with the buyers to try and supply as much product as consistently as possible to the market without flooding it in order to salvage the season. Fleet size was rarely less than 20 and was as high as 34.

Currently, catch levels are .6% ahead of last season to date, with 97% of the North Coast quota achieved. 227,429 pounds remain with a small fleet active in Smith Inlet on the week following this meeting.

One drawback to playing catch-up was upon reaching the end of the regular scheduled openings, there were 30 quota areas (52%) with remaining quota. These areas were then organized into a "clean-up schedule" to be revisited, and is currently in the Smith Inlet quota area.

The season has been difficult economically for the industry and has put pressure on the fishermen to work in weather conditions they would not normally fish in. Overall, the co-operation from the fleet was exceptional, with isolated occurrences where fishermen exceeded vessel limits when completing quota areas resulting in quota area overages. Historically, this has not been a problem and the fleet is coefficient. We can only assume it is a result of this season's competitive nature. Of the 91 licences on the North Coast, 82 have been achieved and one has yet to be designated.

On the South Coast, the September 11th tragedy affect was minimally as harvest does not commence until late September. No scheduling modifications were needed through the season, and the fishery went well. Catch levels on the South Coast were consistent and at times ahead of previous seasons. Currently, 92% of the South Coast quota has been achieved, leaving 148,035 pounds. to clean-up. The majority of quota remaining is on the West Coast (96,891 lbs.) and vessels have been active in the East Coast with only 51,444 pounds remaining.

All South Coast licences were designated and active. 14 of the 19 tabs have been achieved to date.

FINANCIAL REPORT---ross morris

To date PUHA is on par for the year and anticipate approximately a surplus of \$45,000.00 by year end (June 30th) subject to any unforeseen expenses. Having said that, the surplus will be consumed immediately in the new year, as July is the month when most of the PUHA surveys are done with little or no income for that month. For the first time we were able to claim back the previous years GST in the amount of \$3500.00 and this year anticipate claiming back approximately \$2800.00.

Again, the six (6) Canadian processors contributed \$2500.00 each towards our survey and plant sampling programs. The website is getting to become more and more a means of communicating to the membership with room

for improvement. The web bulleting board is for the membership to use.

RESEARCH---dimitri tzotzos

Throughout the 2001 season 7 surveys were completed, 3 study sites and 4 broadbrush surveys for a total of 32 field days. There was pretty good coverage in the Central and North Coast, but about half the surveys were done in or before 1995. The South Coast Broadbrush efforts from 1993 to 2001 have lots of gaps, but most of the surveys are more recent than the ones on the rest of the coast.

The Johnstone Strait survey transects was not placed in Robson Bight Reserve. Most of the fishing from 1997 to 2000 was done in the western portion of the survey area. There are not many beds in this part. There is not much of a recruitment peak, had 5% rate overall. Overall density of urchins was 90 to 140mm TD.

The Fitz Hugh Sound broadbrush survey in the Nalau Pass region had most of the recorded beds. The survey covered 3 PFM sub areas 8-3, 8-4 and 8-16. There are not many beds in the northern, middle and southern portion. The overall recruitment equaled 30.7%, the highest of all broadbrush survey's this year. The overall density was 90 to 140mm.

The Price Island broadbrush survey covered 35 transects in PFM sub-areas 7-1, 7-2, 7-3 and 7-31. At the East Coast of southern Price Island there are a few beds in PFMA 7-3. There are a lot of urchins on the islands between Day Point and McInnes Island, more than 3 times the number of urchins on the Fitz Hugh Sound survey and almost half the number of transects. The recruitment equaled 12.6% and the overall density was 90 to 140mm

The Becher Bay broadbrush survey had 30 transects. The back part of the bay is not suitable urchin habitat (transects 5-11) as few urchins were found. Only 208 urchins were measured. Quite a high proportion of large urchins—83% legal, with very low recruitment (1.4%). The overall density was 90 to 140mm.

Price Island had by far the greatest number of urchins. Beacher Bay had a relatively high total transect length, due to the shallow slope of the majority of the transects in the bay. Fitz Hugh Sound showed the highest recruitment levels, and lowest mean size, which influence each other.

This season, all plant sampling has been carried out by D. & D. They have been looking at what Red Urchin areas were sampled last season, and trying to get to the plants to sample areas that have not been sampled yet. There have been fewer sub-legals observed than last season. Hopefully, they will be able to continue sampling until the end of the season. Very similar mean values for both seasons. The mean is slightly lower this season, but the mean values are the same. There was a slight drop in the percentage of urchins in the 100 to 109mm category this season. The difference seems to be made up for in the 90 to 99mm range. The sampling was frequent from September through to November and less frequent since then, with more sampling since February 20th. There are some small gaps in sampling in areas 6-12 and 34-57 as many of these areas were sampled last season. We hope to begin looking at trends in areas over a season or from season to season.

The 2002 surveys suggestions are Beaver/Freeman Pass and Campbell

River area, as well as area 19. It is possible that all study sites will be revisited this year. It is important to start looking at study site data and decide what course of action is the best one to follow. The plant sampling program should be continued so we can develop a time series and identify trends in areas over the course of a season and over the course of years. Our back log of survey reports for each survey is a must.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN---mike featherstone & ken ridgway jr.

Due to the PSARC quota options paper PUHA had to reorganize the fishing effort to fit into the new options. A meeting was held 2 weeks ago in Nanaimo, attended by 16 divers and Darin Macey of D. & D. A number of questions were not addressed in the paper such as timing issues, consider the west Banks is very exposed, QCC opening, whether it would be just the west and top and saving a block for Christmas holidays.

Ken Ridgway Jr. reviewed the South Coast 2002-2003 draft management plan, while Mike Featherstone reviewed the North Coast plan. Reference attached break down by area.

It was suggested that all Processors make up a graph showing gaps in their market, thus enabling fisheries to make a better decision for fishing.

DRAFT BUDGET 2002/2003---mike featherstone

There are no major changes from previous years. The only increase is the fuel for On Grounds Monitoring, with a possible decrease with survey expenses.

SOUTH COAST LICENCE SELECTION---mike featherstone

The problem with the lottery system is that it creates chaos and uncertainty and is not healthy for the management of the fishery. It is better to have consistent participants who understand the system/areas and thus are better stewards of the resource. If you are only there for 1 year you are less likely to be concerned on impacts or issues. On the DFO suggestion propose an open selection where the outcome may be an unequal quota between North and South. This was the same system used when PUHA started with its voluntary IQ system. How does the selection work? Is it based on the herring model; announce the TAC, allow two rounds of area licence selections and then divide the area TAC equally among the number of vessels in the area.?

DFO will conduct a ballot, which will be like a referendum going out to each licence holder. Each licence holder will vote as to what system they want and a term selection of 1, 2 or 3 years.

There was considerable discussion regarding even and uneven quota's as well as term selection. Long-term selections would require long-term plans.

A motion for DFO to take a vote on options from each fisherman was presented by George Dennis---seconded near David McRae---approved by the membership.

URCHIN MARKET---various processors

SUNG—the market is getting shorter every year, November, December,

January and February mainly. This coming year he expects it to be better if we produce steady. Should open in August in good areas to start with good product. Need steady supply when August opens.

KIKU---agrees with Sung. Canada does not produce large amounts of product compared to other countries. We have reduced our fishing season from 10 to 4 months. We must try to spread our supply over longer period to be able to supply a steady supply of product. August is too early to open. When QCI opens a large volume of product is available, but this year we expect better control regarding our various openings. Licence allocations, we need a min/max of 5-10,000 pound cap. Trying to market product at the best high price as possible. Would like to see poundage increase on each licence. Do not like the high lease prices (\$25k to \$30k). Prefer percentage lease.

PALADIN---A research boat should go to the grounds before fishing to check product to guarantee 6% recovery. We do not spend our money wisely (PUHA). We are wasting time fishing bad areas and getting garbage product. The money really comes from outside and not amongst us; by harvesting 6% in lieu of 3% recovery. We get about .50¢ for 3% and could probably get \$1.80 for 6%. There is no incentive to pick high quality, as a "limit" is really a target. More should be paid for quality than equal payment for all poundage.

GRAND HALE---Most fisheries prices went down this year. We must control our volume. Grand Hale wants to make it work and needs to control volume and boats. 100,000 pounds in 5-day week is too much. We are constantly flooding the market with uncontrolled volume. We would like to produce 5 to 6000 trays per day and we have more people working for \$8 to \$9 in lieu of \$12.00. This is a vicious cycle, so we must have control. South Coast product is not good quality. 70 to 80k pounds per day would be ideal control to keep the price high.

Y. & L.---We agree with Grand Hale. The auction in the states is not like it used to be with product that sometimes does not sell. Our prices are going down. We sell direct and when we get too much product we don't have that many direct buyers, we have to go to the auction. 300,000 to 400,000 per day is too much to handle, thus extended season has to occur with less product per day. The auction is quantity driven and not so much quality driven, thus poor shelf life. We have to get quality product to bring up the price to support the direct buyer. Canadian product is better than before. We need a certain amount of supply every day (approximately 20,000 per day).

FISHERY MANAGEMENT CONCERNS---mike featherstone

A big problem has been the one/two diver issue. PUHA's policy is the legal way, which is 2 divers and a tender. It complicates things for the OGM, trying to identify who has 1 or 2 divers and breaking down the split based on that. If we were to base the split on the number of divers, we should have a clear protocol defined.

As far as geoducks go, there are some 1 diver boats, but is not such an issue because there is never many boats on the grounds. The split is done the same way as PUHA, by boat. The big difference is that the boats can move into the next area and continue fishing if they wish. A big fleet in geoducks is over 8 boats so it is much easier for the OGM and it is also much more tightly controlled. The processors tightly control the number of

boats and their daily production.

The problem isn't so much the split as is more being limited to how much fishing can be done each day. If boats were allowed to continue fishing in the next area once an area is finished, the 1 diver issue would become a minor point. In the past, boats would not fish their allowed pounds, but would quickly move to the new area to get the best spot, plus the problem of ensuring that all landings are reported in the correct area. In the regulations, it is permissible to start fishing the next area provided the product from the last area has been off-loaded first.

George Dennis motioned that allocated pounds in remained areas (clean-up) between working divers as opposed to boats. This would be in place for a one (1) year period---seconded by Bob Hegedos---approved by the membership.

The Seafood Alliance has been beneficial for us to be a member as they are representing all fisheries on major issues.

We have just created a new brochure to be used as a marketing tool. Mike Featherstone will be attending the European Seafood Show in Brussels at no expense to the Association.

A general discussion occurred and the meeting closed at 5:00 p.m.