

BI-ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MAY 14, 2003
NANAIMO, B. C.

ATTENDEES:

Ross Morris	George Dennis	Angus Campbell
David McRae	Ken Ridgway Jr.	Peter Codling
Kevan Heard	Chris Machat	John Parkan
Don Christian	Tim Joys	Mike Featherstone
Herb Watson	Joe Peters	Gary Grant
Ken Ridgway Sr.	Marion Campbell	Dimitri Tzozos
Bob Reinstein	Kelly Mould	

Commenced at 9:30 a.m.

PRESIDENTS REPORT---mike featherstone

Each season the Association faces new challenges and this year was no different. The sea otter strategy and the abalone rebuilding strategy presented new issues for the Association to deal with. The sea otter strategy in particular will continue to be of concern for sometime to come. As you know, Sea Otters have been identified by the Association as the greatest threat to our industry 's sustainability.

At the last general meeting PUHA identified long-term stability and planning as an important goal as we move forward into the future. This year our total allowable catch will remain the same. In November DFO will present another quota options paper which will provide important information for our future. At a recent sea urchin conference in Chile our industry was recognized as a world leader in terms of management, research and sustainability. World wide all other urchin fisheries are in serious decline.

Recently at our quota-planning meeting, stakeholders gathered to review the past season and provide recommendations to managers. I am pleased to say that close to 100% of our recommendations have been accepted into the management plan. There are very few fisheries that can claim this kind of co-operation and consultation. Further to that PUHA arranged over 35 in season changes to keep the fishery running smoothly while trying to maximize economic returns. We will have a more detailed discussion of the management plan after lunch.

On the research side PUHA increased the effort on the experimental research areas by contributing an extra \$8,000 to fund data analysis. The processors funded harvest size data collection at the plants, which provides important information for quota calculations. A lot of work has been completed this year on the reporting side which was another priority identified by PUHA. Dimitri will provide us updates on all that information shortly.

A new initiative this year is the International Marketing Development Proposal that will examine and assess factors affecting the international market place for red and green sea urchin products and develop strategic options for development of the BC Industry.

Over arching issues that affect all fisheries are covered by our membership in the BC Seafood Alliance. I can't say strongly enough how important our membership in this

organization is. I attend monthly meetings where issues such as aquaculture, sea otters, first nations access, WCB, Dive Buoys, DFO policy and trade issues. These are troubling times with war, SARA's and continued economic downturn. When the new season opens next fall we hope to be prepared for any new challenges so we can do the best we can.

SOUTH COAST REPORT---ken ridgway sr.

The South Coast started off with a lottery this year. Most of the licences that were selected, fished for one Processor, so that was a bit of a problem. Licences were traded and we ended up with most of the same people fishing the South Coast that normally fish it. Fishing was smooth and the same pounds were left on the West Coast as normal and we hope to address that in the coming year.

NORTH COAST REPORT---mike featherstone

The season opened in Sept. on W. Banks but quickly moved to the QCC Islands. The fishing on the West side was reasonably steady but eventually hit some snags at Upper West. The fleet was not large so supply was steady. There were some problems with quality at the plants due to the warmer weather, but the fishermen reported mostly good product. The biggest hitch was that the market was weak at that time. Once back to the mainland side the fleet moved steadily through the areas. The one advantage of going to the QCC first may be that the timing for the Principe Channel start was delayed (2nd week of Dec.) This gave the processors a steady supply of good product through the high market demand. There were 35 in season changes during the first run through the management plan. Everything went smoothly until the third clean up when there were some complaints from the grounds regarding the protocol. Unfortunately, there are limited options by the time we reach that point in the schedule. We try and keep Smith's protected for the final clean up area so people are eventually forced to fish the problem areas in order to achieve the quotas. On the return to the QCC Islands things went well although there was a request to open at the bottom end just 2 days before the opening. PUHA cannot entertain such requests on such a short notice as it creates communication and credibility problems. Some areas were hit 3 times, these included Sea Forth, Thompson Bay, Laredo Inlet, Lower Laredo, Moore Island Estevan Grp. S. and Oswald Bay. 3 areas had quota remaining, which were Tribal, Spider and Thompson Bay. At the quota management meeting we tried to assess why the areas were a problem and tried to adjust the quotas to better utilize the resource. Don of D. & D. will provide more details.

D. & D. PACIFIC REPORT---Don

North Coast

- In the N/C of the 93 licences, 85 achieved <1000, 7 unachieved >1000, with 1 not active for the second season (FC6 Tsimshian Tribal Council)
- Of the 67 quota areas in the north 70% were achieved with < 1000 lb
- 97.9% of the quota was taken from the N/C leaving a total of 191,838 lb remaining
- Areas that make up the majority of RQ are:

RU19 Porcher In. 57% taken (21K RQ),
RU47a Thompson Bay 30% taken (24K RQ)
RU51 Seaforth 50% taken (44K RQ),
RU52 Tribal Gr 32% taken (41K RQ),
RU53 Spider 31% taken (103K RQ),

- The clean-up schedule was comprised of 31 quota areas previously unachieved, 7 of those were fished three separate times. An increase from 27 last season.

South Coast

- In the S/C of the 17 SE licences, 14 achieved <1000, 3 >1000
- In the south there are a total of 29 quota areas, 20 in the SE & 9 in the SW.
- Of the 20 in the SE 16 were achieved with <1000 remaining, leaving 4 with >1000
- 98.4% of the quota was taken from the SE leaving a total of 17,551 lb remaining
- 2 areas make up the majority of RQ in the SE they are:
 - 12G Wells Pass. 38% taken (15K RQ)
 - 17 Nanaimo 90% taken (3600 RQ)
- Of the 17 SW licences, 7 achieved <1000, leaving 10 with >1000
- Of the 9 quota areas 6 were achieved with <1000 leaving 3 with >1000 lb.
- 75.5% of the quota was taken from the SW leaving a total of 130,714 lb remaining
- 3 areas make up the majority of RQ in the SW they are:
 - Area 111 37% taken (91K RQ)
 - 27A & 27B Quatsino outside/inside 0% taken (22K RQ for ea.)
- In total 91.1% was taken from the SC leaving 148,265 lb RQ

Issues

- Waterloss; difference between dock wt and plant wt was mentioned several times this season in both the NC & SC. All involving landings from areas fished close to the landing port. Buyers are reporting differences as high as 20% at times. This is something of concern as it could have impacts on industry. At this time some buyers are providing data to D&D in attempts to quantify these concerns in the event it is addressed with DFO. For the time being buyers suggest unloading should be delayed a few hours in areas of close proximity to the landing port.
- Handling of product; again buyers and fishers are raising concerns over damaged product. As market and economical constraints are imposed on industry product quality is even more important. During the course of validation of landings D&D's observers are instructed to address mishandling to the party involved. No other steps are taken. More times than not when addressing this issue our observers are told you know what... If there is repeated occurrences from the same party, this information is then passed to on to the respective buyer to try and prevent future incidents. Often these concerns are not addressed by the buyers until it is too late. Therefore, next season written reports of any mishandling of product witnessed by our observers during offloading will be documented and circulated to the fishers & buyers. In the event of product arriving to the dock previously damaged the observer will not fill out a report but simply comment on the validation log of the extent. Only damage witnessed by the observer will be accounted for.

- Spoiled or lost product; It is stipulated in the m'plan that any product spoiled or lost prior to validation will be accounted for it's entirety. Unfortunately, this season such an event occurred and a considerable amount of product was lost involving several vessels. This lost was minimized considerably as D&D, in support of industry, lobbied with DFO to only deduct a portion of the lost quota from each vessel. However, the entire estimated loss was deducted from the area quota. To give you an idea of the difference, a total of 34,000-lb unrecoverable only 10,000 was deducted from vessels IQ.

BUDGET---ross morris

The finances are in good shape. As of the end of April, we have \$65,000 in the bank, with our monthly obligations to be addressed. We should end up by year end with approximately \$40,000, however, this money will be consumed with Survey work as we do not realize income during the months of July and August.

RESEARCH---dimitri tzotzos

Items discussed with Alan Campbell were the analysis of study site data as being high priority, as well as the publication of a number of research papers on the subject. With respect to the broadbrush surveys, the publication of survey reports and updating of quota options are the main objectives. We have not had the time to do much in the way of comparisons, but once we get more of this season's data, we can start looking at trends in areas over time. The mean and median for this season are slightly higher, but that may go back down as the season progresses, and the fleet works through the clean-up schedule.

We worked with 3 First Nations groups last year. The more help we get with surveys, the more area we can cover in less time, especially when we have two boats. The Campbell River survey had very long transects on average and we covered almost 10km during the survey. Each surveyed area had fairly average recruitment, ranging from 10 to 24%. Beaver Pass had the highest percent of legal sized urchins out of any sub-area surveyed last year. There are a couple of big gaps in areas that have been surveyed, West Coast Vancouver Island and inside and part of the Central and North Coast. Also, many of the surveys in the North Coast are several years old, especially in the Charlottes. There were 60 transects split between Beaver Pass, Schooner Pass and Freeman Pass with shorter transects than Campbell River due to very different slope. The 6 transects in Schooner Pass were excluded from any quota calculations. None of the transects in area 14-13 fell on beds and we recommend a precautionary quota since the area doesn't appear to have recovered very well, but there does appear to be good recruitment occurring.

The density, size frequency, and harvest data was flagged as one of the main priorities for this winter. Last fall we had a co-op student working full time on running a variety of analysis on this data, and she prepared a huge number of figures and tables to illustrate what was happening at the study sites. We looked at data from all the study site surveys, and the data collected during the harvest of 1995 and 1996. At some sites in 1995, only 3 transects were surveyed, but since 1996, 5 transects have been surveyed at each site.

Using the drained weight to test diameter relationship to determine the equation for weight estimates provides a higher estimate of total numbers, so the estimated number of urchins harvested should be the maximum (since using wet weight for the calculations would give

a lower estimate of numbers harvested). An equation was determined for each study area to estimate the weight of an urchin using its test diameter. The dissection data from each area yielded different equations for each area. Price Island had the lowest weight to TD ration, and QCI had the highest, followed closely by Tofino. So, at Price Island, a 100mm urchin is estimated to have a drained weight of 256g, while a 100mm urchin at Louise Island should weigh about 293g. Total numbers of urchins at each site were estimated using the mean survey density and site areas. Two sites in Tofino were estimated to have about 1.2 million urchins or all sizes (about 250,000 urchins above the treatment level of 100mm). QCI had the highest estimated exploitation rates, but differences in density between treatments, etc. were still not statistically significant.

One of the first steps we took was to put together a lot of figures using different combinations of sites, areas, treatments, etc. to see if we could pick out any patterns. With regards to treatment effects, we couldn't really tell just by looking that treatment had any effect on densities.

Recruitment in Alert Bay stayed very low through the 3 surveys done there. Price Island and QCI fluctuated, but stayed more or less level. In Tofino, recruitment was very high during the first survey, and has been dropping each year since then.

We had another co-op student working since January, focusing on analyzing the gonad data from the study sites. We have used gonad index as a measure of gonad size for a lot of our analysis to date. Gonad Index is a function of the gonad weight over the drained weight. Past survey times were not the best for looking at gonads.

The tagging data from the study sites may lead to adjustments in the estimated mortality rates used for quota calculation.

Anyone wishing to do surveys for the coming new year, please contact Dimitri.

SEA OTTER REBUILDING STRATEGY---mike featherstone

1. Pacific Urchin Harvesters Association (PUHA) supports a balanced approach to sea otters, which includes protection of valuable shellfish resources while protecting sea otters from becoming endangered.

Currently the listing as threatened or endangered is based on survey information from 1995. Since that time the population has been growing at an estimated 18.6% per year and the range has increased to include the area on Vancouver Island from Estevan Point to Goletas Channel and in the central coast from the Goose Group to Cape Mark. Over the total range the sea otter population covers the area from California to Russia and is unlikely to become extinct from any catastrophic event such as an oil spill. Considering all current information sea otters are neither threatened nor endangered and the Recovery team should provide updated survey information to COSEWIC and the Provincial Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection to reflect the current status.

2. PUHA opposes further translocations of sea otters.

3. PUHA supports sea otter management zones.

4. PUHA supports compensation mechanisms to reimburse commercial fishermen for the costs of protection implementation.

PUHA's first goal is to get the otters off the endangered list, which will probably will be done through the B.C. Seafood Alliance.

ABALONE REBUILDING STRATEGY---mike featherstone

Pacific Urchin Harvesters Association (PUHA) supports the abalone rebuilding strategy offering our knowledge and co-operation towards the achieving the goals of the strategy. Co-operative research, joint experimental research areas, data collection and key punching as well as, coastal watch and education are some of the areas PUHA sees as having potential benefits for the strategy.

In the past PUHA has shown the leadership and willingness to work together with the Haida, KITASOO and others on research projects. Indeed large areas have been already removed from the fishery to be set aside for study. It was with some dismay that PUHA was not consulted on the proposed closures which affect our fishery and that the existing closed areas were not considered for the abalone research. Never the less, PUHA has agreed to the closure in the Queen Charlotte Islands and in fact proposes moving some red sea urchin research to proposed closed area while reopening the experimental research area for an adaptive management fishing program including a higher exploitation rate with a corresponding scientific analysis. Any further closures that may impact on commercial fisheries should not be considered without full consultation with the effected fisheries. Given that large areas are already closed to the red sea urchin fishery for research PUHA recommends using the existing closed areas for any abalone research.

With respect to data collection, PUHA has already collected data on the presence or absence of abalone in all transects surveyed in the biomass surveys and in the experimental research areas. To expand on this and supply further broad based information PUHA is willing to collect more information through fishing harvest logs. The details of the information to be collect as well as the distribution of costs for key punching etc should be discussed at sectoral meetings, PUHA industry meetings and abalone rebuilding strategy meetings. Some type of cost sharing arrangement should be considered.

Through newsletters and industry meetings PUHA will promote the Coastal Watch Program and the observe-record-report number. PUHA will raise awareness of the abalone rebuilding strategy and educate members on the plight of abalone and the threats to its survival.

B. C. SEAFOOD ALLIANCE---mike featherstone

The Alliance deals with overarching issues and at \$2,000 for our annual membership is probably the best money we spend. Established as the group to for to for advice and consultation. Respect in Ottawa and with the Province. So much covered but I will try and summarize some of the hot issues, Aquaculture: The salmon farmers sit at the table, which is contentious with some of the members. Alliance position is that wild stocks come first, pre-cautionary approach be applied as it is in wild fisheries, increase research

and monitoring particularly with respect to the interaction between wild and farmed and the health of all wild resources be considered when assessing the farm impacts.

- a. First Nations Access: security of access for all participants, one regulatory body with a single and non-discriminatory management and legislative framework, an integrated approach that will deal fairly with First Nations and other users to ensure sustainable and profitable fishing industry.
- b. Security of Access: Ownership by the commercial licence holders for their share of the resource provides responsibility, stewardship and investment.
- c. COSEWIC/SARA: The process is not co-coordinated and managed neither by DFO nor with the established DFO science process. The inexperience in marine fisheries stock assessment. A lack of review process and accountability and no inclusion of the socioeconomic impacts.
- d. Dive Buoys: The proposed sites have been reviewed and recommendations made to lessen the impacts.
- e. Dive Buoys: The proposed sites have been reviewed and recommendations made to lessen the impacts.
- f. SAGIT: This group provides advice on federal international trade issues. For PUHA this includes the review of tariffs on uni coming into Japan.
- g. Agri-Food Canada: Finally convinced the Feds that fish should be classified as a food and therefore eligible for funding for trade development. The AIMS strategy that provides 50% funding for market diversification which PUHA has applied for.
- h. WCB: establishment of a health and safety advisor who can monitor claims, provide safety training initiatives and work on other programs to keep the WCB costs reasonable relative to other industries. Fishing is now a stand-alone industry and the assessments will reflect the costs i.e. more costs higher assessments.
- i. Sewage regulations: No implementation till 2008, eventually everyone will have to meet the requirements
- j. DOT: A lot of regulations effecting fishermen are coming down the tubes. Everyone will be required to Med A Certificate and radio operators certificate by the start of next season. Eventually each vessel will need a certified operator.

W. C. B. ISSUE---peter codling

WCB is focusing on 3 main items: 3 man crew, properly trained divers and current medical. Further, all divers, diving supervisors and divers tenders must be trained in CPR, O2 therapy and diving accident management. Of all the fishing groups, the diver industry has the lowest assessment (.83) with the average being 4.68, which makes the dive industry as having by far the best safety record.

We have had 3 vessels that were stopped and fined around \$15,000.00. W.C.B calculates their fines based on what they feel the fishermen are saving by not having the proper safety equipment or personnel.

Peter Codling stated that these are not fines, but are a proposed penalty. He has a choice of an oral hearing or submit a written submission with his arguments against the proposed

penalty. Peter is going through Employers Advisory Office, which will assist Peter in dealing with W.C.B. W.C.B. insist that divers must operate either with a line tied to the diver, or divers must be in line of site or operate with audio communications. The line system is considered unsafe by the industry. Peter will address his proposed penalty and possibly try to get a variance. He will continue to collect the variance forms.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN---mike featherstone

The draft plan includes the majority of the recommendations of the quota-planning group. The focus was to continue reducing poor or non-producing areas, rationalizing effort by rearranging quotas or changing boundaries as well as adjusting quotas based on densities. North Coast reviewed the start area discussing the same sequence as 2002/2003 or a new sequence starting on the mainland around Moore and Henry. There was no clear consensus regarding the starting in the QCC West side, but many present stated they preferred not to go to the Islands twice. Final recommendation was to open at Henry and Moore Islands. Don will provide the recommendations to Juanita. It was asked that everyone review the fishing plan and it will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting.

SOUTH COAST LICENCE SELECTION/TERM---mike featherstone/ken ridgway

The Association policy is for stability and stewardship, with constantly changing the players these goals may not be met. Further there is a potential problem if one processor gets the majority of south licences. This lessens competition and also may provide an unfair advantage to a single processor. Having more consistency also allows the fishermen to compare areas from the past and use their local knowledge. There will be no vote this year, however PUHA will continue to educate licence holders in preparation for another vote next year. The recommendation is for an unequal selection with one chance to change areas similar to herring and on an annual basis. It was agreed to ask members to come up with an alternative way of selecting South Coast licences and leave it for another year.

AIMS STRATEGY/SEA URCHIN MARKETING---mike featherstone

Government funding for 50%, splitting some costs (i.e. for consultant) with Green Association, some participants will contribute their costs and some will pay the Association 50% themselves. Focus on the market needs, players, potential for new markets. Post the strategy on the website.

DRAFT BUDGET---mike featherstone

A draft budget was presented to the members for their information. Every member was given a written copy of the budget for the coming year, 2003/2004.

The meeting finished at 3:30 p.m.