



P.U.H.A. NEWSLETTER

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President's Report—*mike featherstone*



This year the fishery is off to a slow start with total landings to date lagging close to 400,000 lbs behind last season. The entire shortfall is in the North, as the South is actually running 100,000 lbs ahead of last season. At the last quota planning session the recommendation was to open in the QCC Islands early in the season to test the product quality and front load some pounds to provide more flexibility later in the season. Unfortunately the majority of the harvesters had commitments in the sea cucumber fishery and those that didn't were either unwilling or unable to travel to the QCC Islands. The result was only a hand full of boats, a number of two day trips and a rather disappointing outcome (around 300,000 lbs was taken over 4 weeks).

On the brighter side the QCC Island experimental fishery was completed prior to the commencement of commercial fishing on the Islands. Thanks to the vessels and processors who helped out and participated! See Dan's article in this newsletter for more details.

Another positive development, which has the potential to make a huge difference to our market, is with respect to the Russian IUU fishing. In late October, Russian Coast Guard vessels were active blockading those pirate ships transporting illegally harvested sea urchins into Japan. The effects to the market were dramatic with Canadian tray prices more than doubling on the Tsujiki auction. PUHA has been very active raising this issue with the Canadian government and to their credit Canadian officials have been working actively on this file. PUHA again raised the issue at the recent BC Seafood Summit both with the DG for International Trade and the Deputy Minister of Fisheries. PUHA will continue to profile our concerns at the upcoming trade development meetings we are hosting at the Canadian embassy in Tokyo later this month. At the same BC Seafood Summit, Terry Glavin from the Sierra club offered whatever help and support that the Sierra Club could muster to aid in our fight to curtail this illegal activity. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing it seems the Russian Coast Guard vessels have returned to Rystock and the flow of IUU product has resumed.

Since the summer the biggest concern is the major processors insistence that the new smaller processors not be allowed to participate in the transportation system. After more than two months of negotiations, this situation is still unresolved with PUHA representatives insisting that all vessels have an opportunity to participate, while processors maintaining they have a right to operate under their own terms. Packer operators are stuck in the middle trying to maintain a fair service while keeping their jobs.

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Biologist Report—Dan Leus

Congratulations must be sent out to all involved in the recent experimental harvest conducted in the area of the Queen Charlottes. The joint venture between P.U.H.A., D.F.O. and Haida Fisheries was a complete success thanks to the efforts of many including the crews of the Haida Guardian, Westport, Diver City, Bartster and Forager, along with the packers Ocean Ranger and Western Commander.

With the weather co-operating, and the timing of the harvest planned for favourable tides, the divers were able to remove in excess of 95% of all red urchins bigger than 50 mm in diameter, in five experimental sites. The harvest yielded a total of 48,000 pounds taken in 6 fishing days.

Surveys have been conducted on the 5 experimental sites as well as 5 unharvested control sites over the past 18 months to document the wildlife and algae present. With urchins removed from the experimental sites, our future surveys on all 10 sites will allow us to determine the effects of the removal of urchins on abalone populations and algal communities. This research will help us to determine if red sea urchins have a negative or positive effect on abalone communities.

Industry participation in research is a critical component in the future of urchin harvesting for the B. C. Coast. If you are interested in helping us to make B. C. a world leader in uni, please contact P.U.H.A. to participate in the next research project, or contact Dan Leus directly at leusd@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca



Abalone Poachers

—Globe and Mail 2005.10.19

The latest poaching case came just last week when John Albert Franks, of Ahousat on Vancouver Island, was fined \$35,000.00 after pleading guilty to illegal possession of 196 abalone.

Earlier this year, David McGuire and his cousin Michael McGuire were fined \$60,000, banned from diving and ordered to forfeit boats, trucks and diving gear after being caught with 449 abalone. Despite such significant fines, the cases keep coming, driven by a lucrative black market for a species that becomes more valuable the rarer it gets. Investigators say poachers are paid \$25.00 a pound, but the price doubles as the abalone is passed from wholesaler to fish broker and is raised again before reaching the end consumer.

After a massive stock collapse in which abalone population fell 75% between 1978 and 1984, the government in 1990 banned harvesting. Ms. Laurie Convey, a biologist for the D. F. O. explained that the D.F.O. thought the population would recover after 1990, but the trend is still downwards. At the index sites (where population is monitored), 70% now have no abalone. She said Johnstone Strait, a rich marine environment that stretches 113 kilometers along the northeast shore of Vancouver Island, has virtually been wiped clean of abalone, and other areas are also in bad shape.

Please report any suspicious fishing activity or abalone poaching activity to 1-800-465-4336

President's Report *continued*

The underlying issue is the claim that the new buyers have been undercutting the export price to gain market share, which is hotly denied by the new buyers.

Finally with respect to lease prices they seem to have settled around the \$10,000 mark for this season, there have been reports as high as \$12,500 and as low as \$8,000. It is interesting that back in 1998 PUHA recommended a benchmark for lease prices of 20% of the gross harvest value. These rates are perhaps even lower than that recommendation however in the past years the lease prices have been considerably higher than the 20% benchmark. It is of course an open market based on supply and demand but the biggest concern is that the industry has lost a number of divers who have found they could earn as much or more money in jobs close to home. Hopefully this rationalization of the lease prices puts more money back into the divers pockets and encourages more divers to undertake this difficult profession.

Good luck and safe fishing to all as the season starts to kick into high gear!

