



PUHA NEWSLETTER

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President's Report —MIKE FEATHERSTONE



The quota's for the upcoming season were finally settled on August 25th. The problem for the delay was the DFO's acceptance of the Ahousat Band's (area 24) request for a total closure due to sea otter predation in an effort to protect the food fishery requirements for the band. The upper level bureaucrat's inability to make a decision resulted in a last minute bomb being dropped on PUHA with a proposed loss of close to 1 million lbs. in the revised management plan. After conference calls, face to face meetings and many phone calls PUHA (with lots of help from Juanita and D&D) finally negotiated an individual quota of 96,706 lbs which is a decrease of 1,217 lbs from last season. The quotas will be reviewed again next year under the new assessment framework which emphasizes shoreline vs. the current bed style management.

Regarding the shoreline biomass estimates, PUHA desperately needs knowledgeable fishermen who can provide information to Dan Leus, the PUHA biologist, to improve the preliminary shoreline estimates developed by DFO. Please contact Dan directly at 250 756 7147 or call Mike at 604 230 1686. The plan is to gather for a meeting before the 2006/2007 gets underway.

The destruction of the red sea urchin fishery in Area 24 is not unexpected, PUHA warned DFO of otters migrating into the area last year. PUHA had proposed a quota reduction in the area but planned to maintain a small quota in an effort to monitor the sea otters. The sudden closure of the fishery in Area 24 is presently not justified as no one knows just how significant the damage to the stocks has been. The claims that the Ahousat Band cannot gather it's food fish requirements are difficult to justify as there has been no quantification of the Band's requirements or any reporting of their current catch, both are required under the food fish permits but DFO never gets any numbers. The closure was put in place with absolutely no consultation with industry which simply is unacceptable under the current co-management regime. The upper management in DFO has absolutely no respect for the system and processes which have been developed over the last 15 years.

The Annual General Meeting will be held in September 20th at the Steveston Hotel in Richmond. Of particular interest will be a series of special motions to be put forth proposing constitutional amendments to modernize the constitution. One particular motion proposes 2 votes per licence, one for the licence holder and one for the operator.

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Marketing

—GEOFF KRAUSE

We are now moving ahead into a new season with hope that the confluence of events that contributed to our poor showing last year will not occur this year. Over 1 million pounds could not be fished last year because the demand and supply schedules for Canadian product were out of synch - there were more periods last year when factors like weather and/or quality limited what we could supply when demand was high or alternatively when flooded market conditions caused by landings from Russian IUU fishing in the Kuriles cut demand at times when fishing conditions were otherwise good. These are conditions over which we have limited to no influence but there are things we do have more influence over that affect demand, sales and prices. Continuing as we have for the past few years and taking what we can from the market does not hold a lot of promise that things are going to improve but we can also take hold of what levers we have and set out to improve the reputation of Canadian seafood so it becomes an acknowledged and preferred product class.

Canada's food supply industries are acknowledged by our customers to employ skilled and committed people, great science and advanced technology but are not generally recognized for our strengths. Canada has a very good reputation around the world, but this has not yet been transferred to food products from Canada. Agriculture and AgriFood Canada is working with food producers throughout Canada, including the Sea Urchins from Canada Group, to change this situation. There are great business opportunities just sitting there waiting for us to commit to building a strong brand identity.

A critical factor needed to succeed at this will be meeting customer needs and expectations. We can't realistically influence their needs but we can incorporate knowledge of the factors affecting the product from the time it is caught to when it reaches their plate so we know what to do to avoid problems. The next steps in this process for PUHA are getting post-harvest temperature profiles for the catch and putting together standard colour and texture charts so that we can track the product quality using the same points of reference throughout, no matter whether we are looking at it on the grounds, during processing, shipping or any point in between. The hope is that when the quality takes a hit en route we can identify likely contributing factors and take corrective measures so it does not keep happening.

We are also looking for some of the good wholesome tales that come up during the season. We need content to use on the website or link up through YouTube to connect with the human side of the story. This is you guys- your stories in pictures, in video and/or in words. Come on - contribute-maybe you'll become famous.

Surveys—DAN LEUS

Research activities for the 2006 field season are fully underway with surveys completed at Tofino (in cooperation with DFO) and Louise Island (in cooperation with Haida Fisheries Program). With the ongoing expansion of otters into the Tofino area and the recent experimental harvest in the Louise Island area this was a particularly important year to complete these surveys. The third research site, Price Island, is scheduled for survey mid September in conjunction with the Kitsoo Fisheries Program. The last survey for this season will be conducted in areas 13-28, 13-25 and 13-9 in late September and will be a broad-brush survey. Broadbrush surveys are used to help determine urchin densities for quota recommendations. Analyses of all survey data will be ongoing through the winter.

Quota Model

The Shoreline Length model for quota calculations, recently accepted by PSARC is nearing implementation. One of the critical steps remaining in the process is gathering information from harvesters on urchin habitat throughout the B.C. coast. If you are available for a day to review charts please contact the PUHA research program.

Dan Leus

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President's Report—continued



This is a significant change from the present one vote per licence system and is sure to provide some lively debate. Other proposals will be presented to bring the constitution in line with PUHA's current general operating procedures. A summary of the proposals will be sent out prior to the meeting.

Due to the last minute closures forced by DFO, the fishery is now scheduled to open on Sept.15/06 although the season will probably not start in earnest until later in October.

This summer PUHA completed surveys in the Tofino site and the QCC Island study site. A final survey will be conducted in Johnston Straits at the end of September. Please contact Dan Leus at PBS or Ross (604 524 0322) at the PUHA office for more information. Divers require a current medical and the vessel requires an updated air quality certificate.

It is still too early to predict the market conditions for this season but there seems to be more reaction to the marine poaching in Russia from both the Japanese and the Russian Governments. PUHA held a conference call with representatives of the International Directorate at DFO to push for more Government action on the issue. There was assurances that the Canadian Government is pursuing the issue and will continue to raise concerns at the International level. Any progress to curtail the illegal harvest and importation of sea urchins will benefit our markets.

See you at the AGM September 20, 2006!