

# COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

## Old Massett Community Work Group North Beach & North Graham Island

December 1, 2005

Old Massett Health Centre, 10 am to 3 pm

*Host:* Lynn Lee, Haida Gwaii Marine Matters

*Facilitator:* John Farrell

*Note taker:* Mare Davies

*Website:* [www.marinematters.org](http://www.marinematters.org)

## Summary of Meeting

### Agenda question:

What are key issues for North Graham Island and North Beach?

### Agenda (set by participants)

- Poundage and extraction of razor clams
- Protocol (code of conduct) on the beach (i.e. vehicles, ATVs etc.)
- Sport fishing (drift boats on the rivers)
- Dungeness crab fishery (recreational and commercial)
- Weathervane scallops (ie control and monitoring)
- Beach pollution (ie vehicles, people, boats)
- Recreational licenses and monitoring vehicle access
- Beach access (Yakan Point, North Beach, White Creek and Agate Beach)

:::

### Poundage and Extraction of Razor Clams

- The poundage (commercial quota) every year is dictated to the commercial diggers and every year there is a problem with the quota (diggers feel there is not enough poundage allocated)
- DFO is supposed to monitor and enforce rules around commercial and recreational razor clam digging but they are not. The accountability is not present.
- DFO issues the recreational licenses but does not enforce any rules.
- If we want to keep digging razor clams and have a sustainable future in this industry we have to start monitoring and managing now.
- There is some protocol for clam digging already set (ie size).
- Commercial poundage is based on the Haida Fisheries (HFP) transect surveys from the past decade – but there is no confidence in the community about how accurate those

# COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

surveys are.

- Last year, one transect with commercial diggers was also recorded along with the usual HFP survey for comparison but it was not known what happened with the results of that survey.
- Each digger had a 2 x 2 metre square and dug them up in a line. Supposed to bring them into town and record size, weight – don't know if this happened.

## Recommendations for improved razor clam management:

- Work with Haida Fisheries to find a way to compare existing transect survey results with comparable results from commercial digger surveys so that everyone is comfortable with the abundance estimate which ultimately determines the quota for the next year.
- Look at potential for zoning to help limit impacts and conflicts. For example, there could be an area designated for recreational clam digging and crabbing to reduce conflict with commercial diggers.
- Initiate local management of the beach by gathering reliable data for the number of recreational users and the numbers of crabs and razor clams they are taking off the beaches (checkpoint/toll booth outlined below).

## Protocol (Code of Conduct) on the Beach

- A beach protocol or code of conduct for personal and vehicle use on the beach would go a long way to make sure people using the beach are taking care of North Beach.
- Make sure there are real consequences to not following regulations and protocol for all users.

## Recommendations for implementing beach protocol:

### Establish a Checkpoint Station

- The checkpoint station should have a positive name (eg. guardianship, stewardship, Haida Management Center). Is there an Old Massett Haida figure that could represent 'taking care of the beach'?
- The checkpoint would allow us to keep track of:
  - number of vehicles,
  - number of personal fishing licenses, and
  - number of recreational crabs and clams leaving the beach (commercial fishing is already being monitored and this checkpoint could also monitor Haida food fishing).
- With this information we can:
  - keep a database that will provide people with information about what is happening on the beach and the numbers leaving the beach, and
  - have recreational numbers to add to all the other numbers from Haida fisheries, processors, etc.

# COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

- Peak season for traffic is May to the end of September, but the beach needs to be monitored during winter months as well.
- The station should be located at the entrance where you access the beach (possible location after the Hiellen River bridge on Reserve Land).
- For recreational fishing, DFO is not giving us any numbers on how many licenses they are selling, but with the checkpoint we could keep track.
- Federal regulations would still be in affect – we would get better information on the number of visitors, number of fishers and how much they are getting.
- Presence of the checkpoint would also aid in enforcement of federal regulations (ie. could check for personal fishing licenses, numbers of crab and razor clam fished, ensure minimum size-limits are met)
- Go through an orientation that includes a safety, beach protocol and fishing regulation checklist that will be signed by the visitor (a sticker or decal would be good to show that they have gone through the orientation for those that are repeat visitors over a season). Some of the beach protocol would include educational materials as follows.

## Education about North Beach

- Educate people who want access to North Beach.
- As part of the orientation at the checkpoint station, visitors would get a brochure that includes beach protocol, fishing regulations for crab and razor clam, and some Haida cultural information, including:
  - Vehicle traffic to stay near the high tide line and be above the five foot tide mark on the beach.
  - No littering - pack out what you pack in (garbage cans should be at the checkpoint/toll booth.
  - Campfire regulations.
  - No canning or processing on the beach.
  - Kayak and surfing use at your own risk.
  - No unauthorized camping or cutting of trees.
  - Only leak-free vehicles allowed on the beach.
  - History of the beach to give people a sense of how precious the beach is and its cultural and spiritual importance
  - Limits on how many crab (6/person) and clams (50 clams/person, this is a DFO number that could be decreased).
  - Have to take what razor clams you dig, cracked or not.
  - During spawning seasons make aware what is happening and appropriate protocol (suggestion that there be no fishing except for Haida food gathering during spawning seasons (razor clams in July and August; Dungeness crab in June and July).

# COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

- Zoning times and areas.
- Tides and currents information.
- Biological and ecological information.
- Provide a (cedar?) ruler for measuring the minimum size of crab that can be taken. The rulers could be made by local high school students in shop class and be used for measuring as well as a little memento to take home.
- Have pictures and signs at the beach entrance on the appropriate size of crab, razor clams to take. If areas are zones, signs will be needed at appropriate places.
- Have different venues for education including brochure at places where visitors are likely, at the beach entrance, in the OMVC newsletter and other local papers.

## Potential for entrance fee (toll) at the Checkpoint

- A toll at the checkpoint is desired so that money from the checkpoint would be put back into managing the beach (research, clean-up) and education.
- A nominal fee would be charged to people who want to fish for food and who want vehicle access to the beach (crabs, razor clams, scallops).
- For those who want to go for a walk, hike, or picnic, they could park their car in the parking lot and walk onto the beach free of charge (orientation could still be given).
- DFO sell the recreational saltwater licenses but you will still need to pay between five to ten dollars for beach access. There are four entrances to the North Beach area (North, South and Agate Beaches) but you will get 90% of the traffic at the Hiellen River entrance.
- Two people should run the toll booth and there should be two more people to patrol the beach and enforce regulations.
- Expectation that people will be honest about what they take off the beach.
- For recreational fishers accessing the beach, they would need a DFO personal saltwater fishing license and to pay for vehicle access onto the beach.

## Sport Fishing (Drift Boats)

- There are three lodges in town and they are all using drift boats. Drift boat fishing on Haida Gwaii rivers is quickly increasing.
- There are no reliable numbers on the impact of drift boat fishing.
- The fish have nowhere to hide – drift boating makes all points of the river accessible to fisherman.
- Increased disturbance on banks and streambeds – this is a problem especially during spawning season.
- Drift boat fishing is not consistent with the Heritage Tourism Strategy.

# COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

## Recommendations about drift boat river fishing:

- Fishing from drift boats is not an appropriate activity on Haida Gwaii.
- International awareness as well as local awareness about drift boat fishing, the fact that it's increasing, and its impacts.
- Statement supporting no drift boat fishing on Haida Gwaii signed by local groups, communities and people.
- Media coverage – start with the Observer.

## Dungeness Crab Fishery

- There are no reliable studies done to know the biomass of Dungeness crab.
- Studies are being done by extraction (fishery sampling). They are not actually going to down to the ocean floor and studying the population.
- There are no studies being done on how much of the population is coming up the beach to spawn or how much spawning happens in deeper water.
- There needs to be a certified grader on the boats and at the plants to make sure there are no undersize or female crabs being taken.
- There are cameras on board the boats now but they just manage the catch and make sure you only fish your own pots (not ecological or biological information).
- Getting statistics from the processors is difficult (confidentiality rules).

## Recommendations for commercial crab fishery management:

- Initiate fishery-independent research on the crab population.
- Look to sign protocol agreements with DFO and/or the crab fishing association to access commercial fishing data.
- Work with DFO when they look at the crab coming in on commercial boats (Haida Fisheries). The boats have to hail in before they arrive at the dock so a person could meet them when they come in.
- Send a recommendation to the CHN-DFO Shellfish Technical Committee to take a greater role in monitoring the amount of crabs being fished.

## Weathervane Scallops

- There needs to be some local management of gathering activities.
- There is no quota (but these are scallops that will die on the beach regardless of whether people or birds and animals eat them).

## Recommendations for weathervane scallop management:

- There needs to be information gathering about the activity.
- We can gather information from DFO, local gatherers, and if the checkpoint is running, they can monitor what is leaving the beach.

# COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

## Beach Pollution

- People who abandon their vehicles/boats or get vehicles/boats stuck on the beach should be held responsible for vehicle extraction and any environmental damage.
- Is a safety issue.
- Naikoon Parks and DFO should be enforcing this.

## Recommendations for dealing with pollution:

- Increased local monitoring and enforcement presence on the beach.
- Keep information base about how many vehicles and boats get stuck/abandoned on North Beach and frequency. Request existing information from Naikoon Parks, DFO and RCMP.
- Enforce fines for abandoned vehicles/boats and environmental damage.
- Litter pollution from people and how to use the 'outdoor outhouse' can be addressed in the beach protocol.

## Recreational Licenses and Monitoring Vehicle Access

- Increasing vehicle traffic on North Beach is a huge problem. There is way more traffic than there used to be on the beach.
- Twenty days per month during the crab season there are vehicles on the beach.
- DFO sell the recreational licenses on-line and there is no monitoring of what is coming and going off North Beach.
- There needs to be more of a presence on the beach in regards to enforcement and monitoring. Haida Fisheries conducts a recreational creel survey but more needs to be done.

## Recommendations for recreational licenses and vehicle access:

- Increase local monitoring and enforcement presence on the beach.
- Operate a checkpoint station/toll booth as outlined earlier to address these issues.

## Beach Access

- There are 4 access points onto North and South Beaches: Hiellen River, Yakan Point, White Creek (Ecological Reserve) and Agate Beach.
- Stationing a person at each access point to monitor activities would give an idea of how much each is being used and for what type of activity.
- A checkpoint at the Hiellen River would likely cover 90% of the traffic onto the beaches.

## Recommendations for monitoring beach access:

- Station a person at each access point throughout the peak season to collect information about vehicle and resource use at each location.