

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

Commercial Salmon Fishermen

Meeting # 1

November 22, 2005

Tlell Firehall, 12 noon – 6 pm

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Minutes of Meeting

Commercial fishermen have had three good years for coho and spring in the north. In the spring fishery, the fish were large early on in the season, but the fishing was spot-specific (where there was upwelling and feed) and the writing was on the wall by May. I run a freezer troller and an ice boat during the winter – at that time you can get \$6/lb instead of \$3/lb because there is no other opening and a demand from the California market. Most local boats are freezer trollers. There is a huge variety in wild fish (in terms of colour and texture), and sometimes the fresh fish are not as good as frozen fish. Often you get 25% pink, 10% white, and the rest red. With fresh fish – they will last around 4 days on an ice boat. This makes timelines much tighter and you have to come in even if the fishing isn't great to offload what you have. When I did the charter (200 fish for the test fishery), I decided to go fresh and try and get them in three days because I'll get \$4/lb as opposed to \$3/lb, but it's a gamble.

When I spoke to an ex-troller in Masset, he said he had been involved in meetings and talking about these issues for over 25 years (including being involved with the QCI Fisheries Advisory Board). People are tired of talking and want some action. The idea behind these meetings is to generate something that works from the ground up – the next steps should be identified and then taken by the people living on the Island. The local people who are still involved in the commercial fishery are fewer and fewer and once those licenses are retired, no one will be fishing from the Islands.

- There will be no one with the capability and expertise.
- It is unfeasible for someone like me to enter the fishery when you consider the cost of specific fishing licenses and equipment. Ten years ago it might have been feasible, but now it is financially impossible. The expense means that younger people are not entering the commercial fishing sector and this creates a knowledge gap.
- There are always people, however, willing to start new fisheries and people are moving around within the commercial sectors (for example, crabbers have a good season and buy salmon boats).
- Even though it is difficult, it is still possible that I would end up commercial fishing. For example, I went crab fishing this summer for the first time. Previously I had only fished halibut, salmon, cod and tuna.
- You never know with fishing – the variables change all the time. Who would have guessed that spring salmon fishing would come back like it has?
- The older guys in the fishery have the luxury of choosing when and how much they want to fish. They own their license(s), boats and equipment. They can do two months of fishing – or even a couple of weeks – without too much pain. The new guys, however, have to fish multiple species all year round, all over the coast. Younger fishers are fishing halibut and crab, and many long-time fishers are fishing tuna, rockcod, and long-lining halibut. They have a large amount of money invested and have to work hard to stay in the industry.

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Who is funding this meeting?

- This work is funded by WWF. I work as their local coordinator. WWF has made a commitment to work with communities to build solutions that are appropriate to the people who live there.

Can we still troll off Burnaby Island? What about the Park?

- You can still troll there, just not in the Rockfish Conservation Area. The Marine Conservation Area is not designated yet.

The basic idea is to have a marine plan – with maps – that everyone buys into.

- At least getting as many local people as possible to buy into a plan.
- Try to get consensus.

What is working now, in terms of the commercial fishery? What's the good news?

- The number of boats around the island (trollers) is about where it should be. There used to be 600 and it went down to 250. Now we are at around 150 -160 licenses. Essentially there are not a lot of boats left in the industry, and that's a good thing. Albion has also made a commitment to the islands – they have cod and salmon licenses and they recently bought a local fisher's tuna. Small processing is important here, and in addition to Albion there is Seapak in Masset, local processing of hundreds of thousands of pounds of dogfish (Omega), and a smoking facility may move into the former All West Glass building. It is a money issue – it is hard for fishermen to buy quota, so processors are starting to buy quota and then get people to fish it for them. They buy it and then they put it on a fisherman's license. For example, this is what Albion did last year. Aero does too, but then you have to deliver in Prince Rupert.

It cost thousands of dollars more to catch the same number of fish this year as we did in previous years because of the quota situation. It used to be that if you put the effort in you got rewarded. Now everybody wants equal access to reap the rewards.

- Nobody wanted quota. It was supposedly a one year experiment.
- Now the re-pick is coming up. Area F has become more attractive for salmon, and that's why the guys down south want to go with quota.

Are they limiting the number of boats?

- No. DFO has essentially taken the approach that “the smaller the fleet, the smaller the area you are given to work in.”
- DFO policy has taken away local spots from the local fishery. Access has been reduced due to DFO's concern about West Coast Vancouver Island (WCVI) stocks.

In terms of other things that are working – the fish are now better quality (vs. during the derby fishery). We've also had three good years and fishing is generally safer than it was. The problem is that things change so fast in the industry. Everything that is good could entirely change just because of one new regulation. And during this last season the largest and best fish were caught in the first few days and then the fishing fell off – so if you weren't able to be out at that time you missed out.

Would it work to say “This is an area that should support X number of boats” – cap the number of licenses, and give local boats first dibs on those licenses?

- The trouble is they are trying to build the quota system based on the history of the halibut fishery. People also have a vested interest in an ‘equal split’ approach – they've bought small licenses and stacked them, and that's why they are pushing for quota.
- Now we are considered small boats in the industry (in terms of physical size). It is the catch history that should matter, not the size of the boat, but they use both to determine quota. The other problem

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is that the years have been so variable in terms of catch. At the moment there are three fishing areas: the Gulf, WCVI, and the north. You need different licenses to fish north and south.

- There are far more boats down south.
- There are more than 200 in Area G (WCVI), and more than 400 in Area H (Gulf). The people fishing in these areas want coast-wide allocation.
- In the halibut fishery, quota has essentially turned into a commodity – you can buy pounds so long as you can transfer it to a boat with a license. Quota is often owned by investors in the States. The quota is being leased to fish companies and then re-leased to fisherman for around a \$1/lb. You can just fish it for that amount.
- It costs around \$90,000 to get a boat (license) with minimum allocation.

Isn't that a matter of ensuring there are owner/operator clauses? That was recommended for the halibut fishery but DFO didn't listen.

- There are ways to legally get around owner/operator clauses. Herring was like that originally, but fishermen found ways to get around it. For example, if a fisherman died the quota would go to his wife, and then she could sell it.
- It shouldn't be like that – the Crown should be able to buy it back if the owner/operator dies or quits.
- I had a herring license – I paid my dues and then sold for \$150,000. It was a gamble, and I did well. What has to be understood is that fishermen don't have retirement plans. The boat and license should be worth something because that's the only thing you can sell when you retire. It would be very difficult to change the system now.
- But 30 years ago when you bought your license, did you have that expectation?
- The attitude in the industry has changed now.

What do we want in terms of licensing here?

- The issue is who controls the quota. We are in a unique situation because of the Gwaii Trust. Gwaii Trust should be investing in halibut quota because out of all the fisheries, it is a relatively stable one. Then we can argue about who actually fishes here. The most important issue is quota control. Right now it is all individual – if we manage to get quota for the islands it will then become a community issue and that will involve all sorts of other problems.

How would it work?

- You would lease it, perhaps through a lottery system. You would also have to put your own money into it (secure a boat etc.).
- The CHN does that already.
- It should also be performance-based and there should be residency requirements.
- In terms of performance, the quota could be re-allocated to you for X number of years based on your first year's performance. That's a problem with the CHN allocation – it is a year-to-year allocation and there is no stability or security.

Could you develop a Terms of Reference for performance criteria?

- First you absolutely must have secure allocation. At the moment the recreational allocation is increasing every year. The commercial guys have to have a secure allocation that we can count on, first and foremost.
- I agree – we need to secure the TAC in fisheries. It could work inherently, if all the players were equal. But the problem is that it is not that way. The commercial troll fleet has no voice, recreational power is increasing, and First Nations power is increasing.
- The problem is that nothing is guaranteed – look at how abalone licenses lost their value overnight.

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So people who hold licenses now should be compensated at fair market value, but does it have to be this way for a new re-organized fishery?

- I paid \$35,000 for licenses – now that is my retirement fund.
- Halibut licenses have also fluctuated in value. My dad sold when they were higher than they had ever been before, but they've just kept going up in value. You never know.

What about a community license?

- I like the Gwaii Trust idea. It is island-wide (vs. individual communities).
- Sorry, that's what I meant – the island community.
- But we also have to remember that there are people from down south who have fished this area longer than me. Our advantage is local knowledge and we don't have to pay the fuel in transportation costs.
- We'd need a board to set it up.
- Gwaii Trust would be hands-off.
- The fishing in Haida Gwaii waters is good: almost all halibut fishing (70%) is off the coast of Haida Gwaii and groundfish are at about 50%.

How do you resolve the community/recreational/First Nations allocation issue?

- Gwaii Trust would buy quota for this area alone. The allocation issue will be dealt with at a much higher level.
- There is now talk about doing away with licenses and focusing entirely on quota. This appeals because of the hard numbers that come with quota. At the moment, the TAC is divvied up between the commercial, recreational and First Nations sector. With quota you can assign allocation by percentages to whoever picks up the quota. DFO is trying to simplify things to make their job easier. They are not doing anything to improve things for fisherman – this is for them. I will have to retire early if things don't change – not because there's no fish, but because of the issue of access.
- DFO doesn't want to manage or be responsible – you can see that just by looking at the halibut and shellfish fisheries. Admittedly, those fisheries have been fairly successful though.
- Except that there is no halibut quota on the island anymore. DFO has to set percentages. They've got to cap recreational numbers – every year they are adding rooms and extending the season on both ends. They are constantly increasing capacity and they don't have a cap. Whatever they report each year carries over to the following year and their allocation keeps increasing.
- It is possible that you could use the quota system to get an allocation for the Islands' community.

What's the target for quota? What do we need here?

- If there is money to be made, people would buy in and invest.
- Think about where it fits into the Gwaii Trust – Gwaii Trust can fund infrastructure. The Coast Sustainability Trust (CST) also has \$3.5 million that needs to be spent on-island before March 31, 2007, and it is fairly easy money to access. You could use that as leverage money and go to the Gwaii Trust and ask for X amount to be matched with the CST. You also have to consider that Gwaii Trust and the Coast Sustainability Trust are both non-profit.

How many fish does a local boat need?

- We've had around 2200 spring/year for the last three to four years. Before that it was all over the board because it was more of a 'mixed fishery.'
- So 2000 pieces/boat for 10 to 15 boats...we could calculate based on that and go from there.

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The CHN have started talking about the mosquito fleet again, and could possibly get a block of quota for the mosquito fleet. The CHN could secure the quota, and then the fishery could be managed on-island instead of DFO management.

- How many boats are there on-island that could participate as a pilot project?
- It is important to know that a couple of hundred fish could make a difference in a season. We also have to consider 'who' – what would be the requirements? Would you have to live here? Would you need experience?
- That could be worked out in a Terms of Reference.
- Remember it costs over \$90,000 to get a barebones license with minimum quota in the halibut fishery. It is out of control, it's so expensive. Salmon are cheap now, but people figure it will go like halibut if we go to quota.
- We need a stable number of fish to be supplied to the islands and to the local fresh fish market (eg. Albion, Seapak). This could be a selling point with Gwaii Trust.
- There is also the informal economy to consider.
- You need full certification, especially if you want to export internationally (for example, Albion farms out the smoking to a certified smoker). There are different regulations for BC.

Is it worth pursuing the Gwaii Trust angle?

- You would need to start by creating a 'commission' (non-profit under the BC Society's Act). The role of this entity would be to facilitate quota – it would have to be non-profit.
- Any profit could go back into buying more quota.
- You have to make it flexible because otherwise it sounds like more bureaucracy and red tape. First you need to deal with the allocation issue. There should be an 80/20 (%) allocation after First Nations.
- Sportfishers are now up to almost 40%.
- The halibut fishery is now almost entirely American, even though an 'international' organization sets the halibut quota.
- Canada did get 10% in the beginning.
- It is the same with the Pacific Salmon Treaty – we don't know the numbers, what we need is a percentage of the total. This has to be set for both the sporties and the commercial guys.

Many of these decisions will be made in Ottawa – what can we do? "A small percentage of a negligible amount won't help us" – is that true?

- Just look at the Columbia River this year.
- If this goes to complete quota – regardless if it is northern quota or coast-wide quota – they will probably set it pretty low and then add to it each year depending on the stock. That's what they did with halibut.
- Right now they've set up a "coast group" but northern fishermen are not represented. There's also an allocation board, and they're talking about doing away with area licensing. They are saying that there should be an even playing field – which essentially means that everyone should starve. We are trying to slow the process down because with each step we lose more. We are fortunate at the point because you can still make a living fishing in the north.
- The buy-back is just now starting to work in the north and DFO proposes a re-pick. That is going to do nothing but add boats to the north. There will probably be less fish next year – more boats fishing fewer fish.
- We are also being saddled in observation fees and fuel costs.
- Fish are counted four times – I count, Archipelago counts, the company counts, and J.O. Thomas gets an offload count. It's ridiculous.

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What does “being flexible” mean?

- You would want a couple of people on the board who would make smart business decisions about when to buy quota and who gets the quota. Maybe we could set up a fund so that we don't buy quota outright but buy it at the right time. For example, you can buy gulf licenses cheaply, stack them, and then transfer them to the north. This is what the smart guys are doing – they are flipping licenses in one year for a huge profit. You would also need ‘survival guys’ – people with fishing smarts. If you put money in a fund, you can allocate money for communal fishing on QCI and buy some licenses. There should be a couple of fishermen and a couple of business types. Just be careful and don't write a bunch of rules.
- Don't you want to have rules and a Terms of Reference so that it doesn't become political?
- There are so many uncertainties – the salmon fishery might not go quota, or you might want to get into mixed fisheries instead.

Can we look down the road and say ‘this is what we want’?

- I'd like to see small open fisheries. For example, open Hecate Strait to a spring fishery in May and give 2000 pieces out of 160,000. That would employ 5 guys out of Skidegate for three weeks. This is similar to our little winter fishery which used to be 10,000 pieces and is now down to 3,000 because of WCVI concerns (the Cape has been closed because of WCVI stock politics). There are windows where there are local stocks going by that they couldn't open the entire fleet to, but could open locally. This year, however, it looks like we won't have a winter fishery.
- Now it is actually open and we could catch 200-300 fish but that number would come off the quota for next year.
- DFO actually supports these ideas, but it all comes down to allocation: how much of the total can you allocate to small open fisheries? It is possible to target stocks that aren't being hit. The Area Manager does have the power to do it (for example, openings in Cumshewa).
- DFO is losing managers. New people are scared to death of opening commercial fisheries because they are afraid they will make a mistake, so they take the easy way out. Look at the Cultus Lake fishery – they were trying to protect 341 fish and they shut down a \$3 million fishery when the problem was probably the lake itself, not the fishery.
- The DFO science budget is also miniscule. Fisheries are shut down all the time based on very few data points. There is no consistency in the industry and therefore it is hard to treat it like a business.
- Now the WCVI stocks are coming back and they are running out of that excuse. We fished right through this year and the world didn't end.

Maybe we need money in a research fund to do our own sampling?

- There is a lot of distrust of DFO samples and science. All the fish for sampling purposes are caught in a few days and very few fish are actually sampled. This means questionable data.
- In Kano Inlet apparently they sampled more than 30% but there was a problem with the analysis of samples.
- A few years ago in the salmon fishery 27 fish were sampled and 3 were determined to be WCVI and they shut the fishery down based on 3 fish.
- There was a 16% report off of Hippa and they shut it down. Two weeks later they discovered there was a mistake and it was meant to be 1.6% so they re-opened the fishery.
- There is little information on catch of local populations. We need to know what's going on here with respect to fish stocks. We need locally collected data and monitoring, and we need more confidence in the information on which we base decisions.
- If you are not out there fishing, you don't know what's going on. Most Island guys are interested in doing a 200 fish monitoring fishery. Test fisheries can tell you size, abundance, and proportion of stocks – but you can't just give them to QCI fishermen.

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- We need to put a program in place and then ask for letters of interest. We could apply for a local test fishery (for five local boats) and get funded to do it. If the community came up with the money to do samples, you could do it independently.
- The problem is that some fishermen can't even pay dues.
- The money has to come from somewhere.
- DFO only wants information that supports what they want to do.

How can we fund research and monitoring?

- Argument to be made through SMFRA because of the impact of logging on fish streams.
- The problem is that there are very few of the fish that are caught are local.
- But the stocks are collapsing in Skidegate Inlet. With wild smolts we could fin clip in Skidegate Inlet and see where they are being picked up. Someone should try and figure out what's happening. Chums have collapsed in Skidegate Inlet, pinks are on a downward slide, and coho have been totally hit.
- The Deena has some information.
- The patrol program has fallen to pieces.
- Could this be funded through SMFRA?
- You could make an argument about the fish-forest interaction.
- The patrol program is also land-based – work would be done on the Islands.
- There has to be a monitoring system in place. There was 20 years worth of data – and then nothing, which makes the data useless.
- This year we lost July and they moved us to August when local stocks started showing up so we began targeting our own fish. When you look at the coho escapements for the mainland – they are full of fish. They have record escapements and are closed. The stocks are collapsing here and we're still fishing. DFO have said that the mainland side of Area F is closed.

Who would do it and when?

- Smolt tagging and clipping would have to be done in April and May. We could also do coded wire tagging, and charter patrol contracts happen in the fall.
- Hecate Strait Streamkeepers could do some of the work.
- The Tlell Watershed Society could also contribute.
- The problem is that SMFRA funding starts flowing in May at the earliest (decisions aren't made until mid-April).
- We could apply to do the charter patrol in the fall and start the other work the following spring.
- It is an issue of dates – you can't get money for the following April or May because it is past the end of the fiscal year. There is no flexibility with the provincial government in control of SMFRA, although we are working to change that. You could probably get charter patrol money, and Gwaii Trust might be able to come through on other things because SMFRA couldn't fund tagging and clipping (Gwaii Trust is more likely to fund something that SMFRA cannot). Basically, you would have to make the argument "we can't control fisheries because outsiders control the science so we need to take control of the science." Then you could go to the CST for infrastructure money.
- WWF could also partner with local groups and organizations.
- My advice to fishermen at the moment is to get another job. I'm not interested in doing streamkeepers work – I want to fish.
- Some people are interested though, and it is a good job for the right person.
- Carl is essentially saying that research is one issue but it isn't dealing with the fishery issues directly. I can commit to talking to Hecate Strait Streamkeepers and the Watershed Society about research options.

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What is WWF's position on sport fishing lodges?

- There isn't one. WWF has focused on stock condition. We also have committed to work with communities to find solutions that work for local people.
- The sport lodges are filled with executives on weekend trips.
- Next week I'm meeting with local recreational fisheries and will discuss the issues of 'code of conduct' and what the industry can do to address catch and release concerns.
- The problem is that they have an allocation but no cap on that allocation. The extent of their impact on the stocks is also unknown.
- There is creel survey data, but there is a question of accuracy there. People are now at the dock recording catch at some (but not all) of the lodges, and they only record definite mortality. Individuals should be required to report their catch.
- They need to make as much of an effort collecting recreational catch data as with the commercial fleet.
- This seems to be a process issue – maybe there needs to be mandatory catch reporting by individuals with repercussions/penalties.

Is there high-grading now with the quota system?

- There is some dumping, but not a lot.
- There is no time to high-grade. With the cost of fuel, you can't afford it.
- There is a significant value difference between white and red spring and so once you've cut the fish open and know what it is, people do dump the white spring.
- I brought white spring in under the First Nations food fishery – that's the way I got around it. Most of the white spring are around early and gone by July.

[BREAK: Explanation about the WWF information provided to participants. Comment that the RCA around Frederick Island was a good location because there are a lot of rock reefs and rockfish in the area.]

What the island needs is a freezer facility and a certified smoker. We need to maximize local dollars and make an extra dollar for every pound of fish. Isabel Creek is now selling local fish – we need to continue in this direction.

- The mosquito fleet could supply the local market with fresh fish and legally supply local restaurants.
- It would obviously be seasonal.
- You could freeze fish for later using a commercial freezer.
- True – you should freeze halibut, and fish for the sushi market should always be frozen first.

There is also the issue of branding – there is an opportunity to market fish from the 'Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii.'

- People see this place as wild and unpolluted.
- Albion is currently looking into the branding issue.
- You can charge more money for QCI fish – people are willing to pay (gave example of fair in Vancouver) and it is already happening.
- Maybe the large processors should get together and consider branding.

Omega hasn't bought salmon in years and Seapak primarily buys it from Albion. You can sell to Albion and, to a lesser extent, to CBIsland (who supply it to the smokers). The big processing problem on the islands is that there is not enough freezer space.

- What we need is community cold storage where you can rent space.
- Someone who owns the reefer trucks (located next to Crabapple Creek) is talking about organizing a freezer/cold storage plant in QCC, and he is currently doing some contracting for the lodges. He would also use his reefer trucks to ship to Vancouver.
- Could this be a Coast Sustainability Trust infrastructure item?
- If someone is already trying to make it happen, then you might want to wait and see.

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What about stipulations to sell to local processors?

- You need a provincial (fishing) license – fish have to be declared under the license and then validated to be sold to local processors. Albion meets us at the dock.
- Where do you sell your fish?
- I want to catch fish, not sell them. When I arrive at the dock, I want to shut my boat down and clean it off. I sell to a company that I believe in – one that will give me the biggest bonus, and one that I trust. Albion essentially owns us that way – they are a good company and we are in a very lucky situation. Albion is the best friend commercial fishermen have got.
- With an ice boat you only have a limited amount of time. With freezing you have more options. Regardless, it is convenient to deliver to Charlotte. Albion has adopted a “closer to the source” approach to market their fish. They are now buying directly more and more fish to process – not only from fishermen but also from Aero and from farms. Albion would probably like to get more fish and on QCI land is cheap so there is opportunity for expansion.
- At the moment they are sending fish to St. Jean’s in Nanaimo for smoking.
- Albion also process, fillet and vacuum-pack fish for the recreational fishery. Seapak is at capacity. There is also a real difference between domestic and export regulations. Smoking fish, for example, could be really problematic for “mom and pop” operations – German tourists were doing smoking and selling fish at home to offset the costs of their holiday and people became sick. The end result was that tourism dropped off.

What about the issue of the commercial fishermen losing ground to the recreational fishery?

- There seems to be two issues: (1) allocation, and (2) ribbon boundaries.
- There is less antagonism now. We all realize that they are here to stay. They have a lot invested now so they will talk to us, but really there is no incentive to come to the table. Why would they? They have everything at the moment, and talking would just mean they’d lose something. The bottom line is that there has to be enough allocation to keep the commercial fishery alive. That needs to be a priority.
- We are near a saturation point at the north end.
- They should be allocated a number of boat days/lodge – they can sort it out themselves. They need a percentage allocation that is capped. And then there is the question of whether or not quota is for sale. Allocation shouldn’t be for sale – we need to have set percentages for each, maybe a 70/30 split? Ultimately, what’s good for the fish? Fishermen want to be fishing in 10 years. In the past people were greedy but those people were the first to leave. Now that the local fisheries are making money, we have the greedy guys coming back. They are “in and out” – leaving no money behind on the island.
- The industry has driven people to that approach – nowadays people need to fish multiple species for at least 8 months of the year. The people who were left after the buy-back were the ones who owned the boats. New guys were squeezed out.
- The local guys have managed to survive.
- You never know what’s around the corner. Four years ago we were not fishing at all, and now we’ve had a few good years but the fishing may start declining again. It is possible we’ve already hit the peak.
- It really is living year-to year in the commercial fishery.
- The only people who are complaining in the sport fishing industry are the new guys on the block, like the guys in Tasu and Englefield. They are the ones who complain about the commercial fishery, and they give huge amounts of pro-sport fishing propaganda to their guests. When there were the Kootenay and Cape Flattery openings, they complained bitterly to DFO. Oak Bay Marine Group stated publicly that they wanted commercial fishermen off the water. Now everything below Hippa is closed. When they moved the line, it was only down to Chad Point because Tasu was still operating. The ribbon boundary at the top end is essentially the start for the management of 2W. There are now

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no coho in Tasu, and they are blaming the commercial guys. But there has been no fishing on the west coast for coho – except a few fish caught north of Frederick. Essentially they’ve fished the coho out of Tasu. Look at the catch statistics (DFO should have them) – get the numbers and see. Charter patrolmen go out and collect the information every year, and in the first couple of years they caught thousands.

What about zoning?

- We essentially have that now but the commercial zone is getting smaller and smaller.
- So you need zones that work for the commercial fishery?
- At the moment commercial tacks are running into the sports guys. It is all mixed up.
- There is also the issue of timing – at the moment there is nothing for us until August. There are no fish at Tian anymore, and because of the concentration of lodge ownership the lodges are able to move boats around to where the fish are.
- Oak Bay is probably the biggest group, followed by West Coast Fishing Club.
- At the moment the ribbon boundaries are working out alright in the north, but they haven’t worked down south (Tasu). With the quota system, we’ve pretty much given up Langara (off the lighthouse). Nowadays, sportfishers will go for miles offshore and will end up in the middle of the commercial fleet. Some of those guys are there specifically to cause trouble for us.
- You can see the guys who are willing to move – the guided boats who respect our need to stay on a tack. Some absolutely refuse to move though, and there is a need for a Code of Conduct.
- Many of the guys who don’t respect the commercial boats are unguided. They should not allow unguided boats.
- It seems to me that there is a problem with the way zoning works right now – it is a “one guy out” approach (the commercial fleet) versus zoning for both recreational and commercial use. Maybe that needs to change because the sportfishers are eventually going to be forced to admit they can’t expand forever.
- It is important to put it down on paper and state “this is what we want.” That will provide a starting point and forces discussion.
- We’ve already seen our area whittled down. With the quota system this year, some of those areas have actually been opened back up.
- That is the bait to get the commercial fishery to support quota.
- The reality is that old deckhands are now working at fishing camps – and they know where the fish are.
- Are there some areas that are “more commercial”?
- The sportfishers will fish in almost anything the commercial guys do. Weather doesn’t seem to be a problem for them. It has gotten to the point where I actually listen to the radio to see where they are fishing.
- Just by using language such as “management zones,” it pushes the idea that there needs to be management of recreational zones. Language is important and can change the mentality.
- Statements need to be made – it is a matter of who is going to make the statement. It is important to be proactive because change is already happening. People are afraid to draw lines on a map but if we don’t do it ourselves, someone else will force us to go by their rules.

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

My suggestion is to look at the near future. Focus on next year and get something together that we can all get behind to enhance the commercial fishery in the immediate future, as well as into the future. For example, let's keep the winter fishery open. We need to spread out fishing over the seasons because concentrating fishing in one month is not good for stocks. At the moment we are closed down once the sportfishers are opened and ribbon boundaries are established – usually around May 1st or 15th, after which the beach is essentially cut off for us. We are open in the winter because sportfishers are not there. The ribbon boundary just keeps growing too – it's almost reached Tow Hill and it is likely to start expanding on the west coast. With quota there should be a set TAC and more areas should be open.

- What's stopping you from fishing in the winter fishery?
- Nothing technically, except the weather. It is open right now. The problem is that the guys down south are pushing hard for quota and any fish we take will come off next year's quota.
- They don't want 5% of the quota being caught by 30 boats.
- There should be a special winter fishery with a separate quota.
- Which was the way it was before – it is an allocation issue because it still comes off the TAC. September and early spring fisheries have saved the local guys in recent years because no one else shows up to fish.
- Are you saying there should be an allocation for a winter fishery that's not tied to quota and comes off the TAC?
- The winter fishery allocation used to be 10,000 but last year it was down to 3,000. The guys down south are the main opposition to the September to April fishery because they don't want to have to travel up north to fish during the winter. But if it goes to coast-wide quota, there wouldn't be any opposition from them. Now they don't want it because it comes off the TAC.
- You pretty much need to increase the quota to help the north. But the commercial guys are last in terms of priority. The recreational fishery is first, apparently based on economic studies that show that the sportfishers make more money for Canada. They don't consider catch and release or local communities though.
- One option would be to limit recreational access to spring salmon. They could still catch halibut, lingcod and coho. That way there would be enough fish for everyone. Also, some lodges let their guests sign up for a "catch and release" option where the lodge buys fish from the commercial fishery and lets people take home fish that he's bought (if they release the ones they actually catch).

DFO policy at the moment prioritizes full recreational openings before commercial openings based on the number of fish of each species that can be taken per day. How does that fit with the allocation issue?

- They want to put a hard number on springs because of the (Pacific Salmon) Treaty. All other species are abundance-based. The commercial fishery should be guaranteed a percentage of the TAC. Now we are just getting whatever the sportfishers don't get – the "leftovers." If we pick up 50 more boats in the re-pick and the TAC goes down, then we will have a huge problem here.

How do they decide on numbers for Area F vs. Gulf vs. WCVI?

- It is stock-based.
- At the moment it is 240,000 for Area F, but that number can change in-season too. Of course, it only ever goes down in-season. I've never seen it go up even when indicators suggest incredible increases in historical abundance.

Is there an argument to limit fish licenses in Area F?

- Yes. The buy-back is just now becoming viable in the north and now they are allowing a re-pick. It is ridiculous. My understanding is that meetings are happening now and the re-pick could possibly happen this winter.
- They limited licenses in the herring fishery – you needed 2 licenses to fish one net. That's how they pooled the herring fishery.
- How does an additional 50 boats compare to the number that was here before?

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS BUILDING

- The fishery has changed since that time. Now there are major restraints and we are under a piece constraint as well (used to be shotgun openings).
- I think a new system is inevitable – the shotgun fisheries had all sorts of problems.

So quota could be a good thing – now the question is how do you make it work for you?

- For quota to work, you need to do three things: (1) you have to get a commercial allocation, (2) a community quota, and (3) you have to limit the number of boats. Now they are hoping to move boats from down south back up north – but when those boats originally left the north, they took the sockeye fishery with them. Sockeye became a terminal fishery and was poorly managed, runs were late and so on. Now they've had a series of bad years - it's not working for them – and they want to come back. DFO have had to deal with all sorts of protests in the south. Not only has the sockeye fishery been a disaster, the commercial guys have also been reduced to little openings for springs, and they've lost the coho fishery to the sporties. In the north, the fisheries are generally cleaner.

Gwaii Trust money is for Islanders – would it be possible to lease more quota to offset the increased number of people coming up from the South?

- There is also the case to be made for the winter fishery.
- The problem is that they don't even want to give up a single fish from the TAC – not even 3,000 of 170,000.
- But if it goes to quota, then that's not an issue. Local quota would also give local fisherman an edge.
- They are also talking about shifting from boat licenses to personal licenses. This would turn quota into a commodity. Halibut quota is hugely valuable these days because you can lease it, and leasing inflates the value.

Allocation seems to be the answer for the winter fishery, mosquito fleet, and as a possible solution to the arrival of new boats on site.

- The halibut fishery is relatively stable, and spring salmon is more volatile. The problem is that the TAC for spring salmon could change radically.
- So after the fishery changes to quota, the fishermen will have quota and you could buy it from them?
- Example of someone who has a fish processing plant down south as well as owning licenses and boats. He basically has a monopoly so he can sit on spots and fish for his plant. That's what you need – a monopoly. You need to control the entire chain. He is trying to add value to fish – he custom smokes for a niche market.
- He has stacked licenses.
- He might be a good advisor for the board.
- We are his competition though.
- People on the board need to have the interest of the commercial fishery as a whole in mind.
- Adding value to salmon is a positive thing. Quota could be good because it means we can work through the seasons. Halibut are managed by weight, whereas salmon are by numbers (which isn't a good thing).
- Isn't it really a question of being proactive instead of reactive?
- If there is a lesson, it is that he bought quota early and cheap.
- Owning the resource is the bottom line – look at black cod and halibut.
- So it is about accessing money – and we do have opportunities here.

My hope is in the Haida. We need to be right onside with them – they are good friends to the commercial fishery and they have access to quota.

- They have five salmon licenses and, if they don't fish them, they lease them out. It was a bit of a fiasco this year though and Masset ended up sub-leasing.
- Theoretically, it is a good system.
- The key is to keep adding value to local fish through processing plants, smokers etc.

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- We need some local cooperation with boats to get fresh fish all at one time so that it can be transported out together and be economically viable.

Who does this? The money is there, we just need a body to pitch it and put together the next steps, including policies and Terms of Reference.

- Look for people who have a vested interest in the industry (eg. Albion and fishermen).
- Now you need licenses – someone has to own licenses. The Haida have licenses.
- So the group needs to start buying.
- It boils down to who is going to control the fishery. The halibut fishery is a good example of a fishery moving out beyond anyone's league. Salmon will probably follow – but for how long when you factor in the sportfishers? There needs to be a hard allocation – a percentage for us and them.
- But you need to take the steps and move on it. Even if you don't buy now, you could get ready to buy.
- It is important to understand that this is an investment in the community – it is not a business investment.
- It is a matter of being prepared to buy quota when it goes to quota, which seems like the most likely scenario and the most feasible option. Buying licenses now doesn't really make sense.
- Gwaii Trust funds the building of social capital – it doesn't necessarily have to be a profitable business.

So are community-based licenses a good idea?

- Yes, it is a good idea that should be floated to Gwaii Trust representatives.
- This might also be a license that allows local fishermen to supply the local market with multiple species from a mixed fishery.
- It is also important to have a pool available to local people outside of the Haida community because the Haida already have their own pool. Maybe it's a good idea to buy other species quota and work into salmon when salmon quota becomes available. For example, buy halibut. Right now it is about \$34/lb with a minimum of 1,600 lbs attached to a license. You could get around 10,000 lbs for about \$400,000. There is around a 5% guaranteed return on the investment, and there are many people who fish halibut and salmon. The community license idea should be put out to the public – present it, get feedback, and form a body.
- You need to get people who are committed to the local fishery and local market – people who have history in the north.
- Are there examples elsewhere of community licensing?
- In Alaska.
- Originally community licenses in Alaska were issued to native bands for the pollock fishery, and then the program was expanded. Some communities have been very successful – especially those who got large pollock allocations to start with. They were later able to expand into crab and other quota fisheries. Here on the Islands, halibut is the most stable fishery but it would be a long-term investment. You could also put community money into a joint venture with Albion or another company (eg. for a cold storage facility).
- Infrastructure money could come from SMFRA or Gwaii Trust.
- There is interest in the north right now, and funding opportunities come with that.
- It is important to build the commercial industry up. We can start with shore-based employment because that generates interest in the industry. That is what the sportfishers are doing and their power is just increasing – they are starting to invest in the community because it is benefiting them. There has to be a point where we are happy with the level of employment that each sector has reached. We have to start looking at how it can work best for everyone. We could, for example, be processing more fish here because that reduces the cost of shipping.
- Smoked fish in brine doesn't need to be frozen, which also makes it easier and less expensive to ship.
- 80% of a fish is usable – Albion ships whole fish, mainly within BC.

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- I like the idea of a fund to buy up control of a fishery, and I think you could aim for a percentage of every new fishery and buy portions over the long-term. Squid, for example, could have been a viable new fishery here last year.

So the next steps are: (1) look at other models of community fisheries and how it is being done elsewhere, (2) put together a proposal for funding to move the idea of buying quota forward (the first proposal would be to generate interest, followed by a second proposal to actually purchase quota), (3) address zoning and caps with respect to the commercial and recreational fisheries.

- There is also the issue of enforcement. DFO is not interested in enforcement – they are trying to get out of managing fisheries. If there is no cap on the recreational fishery, there will be no commercial fishery. On the other hand, the sporties may soon be maxed out.
- The fourth step is to look at long-term research opportunities.
- We should schedule another meeting in Tlell.
- Invite Albion as well – they should be part of this discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 5: 45pm.