



# DRAFT MINUTES

Prawn Sectoral Committee  
Friday November 30, 2001  
Dorchester Hotel, 70 Church Street  
Nanaimo, B.C.

1. **Introductions**
2. **Sectoral Committee, Structure and Process**

Last meeting was Sept. 21. Industry elections were held in October. 87 % of licence holders returned ballots. 12 industry reps. elected (list attached). Welcomes were extended to Simon Smith (Saanich Tribal Fisheries) and Sidney Sam (Ahousat Fisheries) who have agreed to continue to provide advice to the Committee. Invitation to participate has also been extended to Sliammon First Nations, not in attendance at this meeting. Cheryl Wilson of Coastal Community Network will continue membership, but was not present this date. W. Harling will continue as the SFAB rep. The Committee is still in need of environmental group representation.

3. **Saanich Inlet, Saanich Tribal Fisheries' Recommendation For Winter Closure**

Simon Smith spoke about Saanich Inlet. He sees same people fishing all the time, seven days a week, one dozen guys fishing seven days a week with up to 5 guys on board. STF recommends closure, will take measures if not closed. No more salmon, no herring, no bottom fish. Appreciates prawns being monitored but would like it shut down for six months of the year. Traps not being pulled. STF believes in conservation and abides by rules.

Larry Paike, DFO Conservation & Protection, Victoria office, agrees with Simon regarding effort. His office is monitoring as best they can. Can't speculate what is happening, has been close to offenders several times. Acted on complaints. Question of amount of time and resources to devote.

W. Harling, Sports Fishing Representative. To date does not recommend closures based on speculation. Consider closures if sampling shows low spawning index.

Discussion items at the table included a variety of open/closed recreational fishing patterns; time requirements and complexity for regulation changes; partial closures vs. complete closures; closure timing generally considered to be winter when females are carrying eggs; U.S. recreational fishing patterns alleged to be April to Sept./Oct, weekend fishing in some areas; First Nations fishing during possible closure discussed; weekend recreational fishing closures suggested as alternative to complete closures, this can be done by variation order of existing regulations rather than seeking a reg. change which is a 1 – 2 year process; this would only apply during the incubation period, full fishing would be in place when commercial fishery is also open full time.

Discussed that current regulations do not limit the number of recreational fishing traps on a string and the owner's name on markers.

Simon Smith will take comments back to Saanich Tribal Fisheries member Nations. Wayne Harling will take Saanich closure recommendation to local SFAB/rec. fish members and will advise DFO of rec. fishing views on this, by mid to end of Dec.

#### **4. Recreational Fishing Area Spawner Index Surveys, Update**

Surveys by commercial vessel volunteers are proposed or underway in 7 coastal areas – Saanich Inlet, Stuart Channel, Nanaimo, Campbell River, Port Alberni, Pender Harbour, Salmon/Sechelt Inlets. Another area (Gold River) will not be tested. Scientific licence surveys based on 150 traps. Some results have been received, but have not yet been analyzed. Results, review and decisions as may be needed are expected in mid December.

#### **5. Howe Sound Spawner Index Survey, Update**

DFO Science Stock Assessment survey in Howe Sound in late October, early November by the Royal Bounty showed decreased levels of egg bearing females. This will be reviewed and decided in conjunction with information arriving from commercial vessel surveys, described above. It was suggested that increased recreational fishing effort in Howe Sound may adversely affect Stock Assessment's use of the area for long term studies.

#### **6. Recreational Fishing – Status of Proposed Regulation Changes**

Last January met with subcommittee with ideas proposed from Prawn Sectoral Committee meetings. Last May documents were prepared and submitted. Status – reg changes on track. Expected changes; operator's name instead of owner's name on buoys, only four traps on a string to be hauled by fisher who is named, possession limit change from weight to piece count, 2 traps to be permitted on one buoy. Expect regs. to be in place by April, barring unforeseen circumstances in final review and approval.

There was a question and discussion of notification of recreational fishers as the Sports Fishing Guide is good through 2003 and will not be amended or reprinted before then. Notification will be by notices fanned out to sports fishing organizations and postings at marinas.

There was a discussion of prawn fishing practices by charter fishing resort and local charter boat operations. These practices will be affected by the reg. changes, which will limit long strings of gear.

There was a discussion of poachers overfishing in recreational fishing areas, that may be affecting spawner index levels to the detriment of other sports fishers, dinner cruises

alleged to be selling fresh prawns in Powell River area, possible need for closures in areas of illegal activity.

The structure of the Sports Fishing Advisory Board was described as a 3 tier system – the main Board, the Groundfish/Shellfish sub-committee and local area groups. Commercial representatives expressed an interest in having representation on the Groundfish/Shellfish Subcommittee and/or on the Sports Fishing Advisory Board.

250,000 sports fishing licences issued last year of which a small percentage fish prawns. Sports prawn fisheries has no spawner index monitoring.

Efforts to get local prawn fishers involved with spawner index monitoring were noted. They are active in Stuart Channel, Alberni Canal, and interest has been expressed in Howe Sound.

Simon Smith advised that mid Island tribes have concerns for trap sizes and mesh sizes. If Saanich Inlet is closed, they can help as they own one of the major boat launching ramps in that area. Importance of closures to Saanich Tribal Fisheries was reiterated by Simon Smith. It was noted that this is a Douglas Treaty area.

Sidney Sam spoke of the First Nations' right to fish 365 days per year for food, social and ceremonial purposes. Fishing does not have to stop unless there is a conservation problem. They practice selective fishing. He referred to the coho abundance at this time, but the problems in protecting Thompson River coho stocks. He referred to recreational fishing visitors from U.S., Germany and elsewhere. He indicated that First Nations fishers lost the right on clams, cannot fish 2 days before and 2 days after commercial openings.

The Committee was supportive of Simon Smith's closure recommendation. The impending arrival of sample results was noted. The Committee agreed that closures should be implemented as quickly as possible if they are needed. Some members recommended that if spawner index is reduced but fishing can continue, consider weekend openings to extend the time available for fishing. But if the index is too low, then the areas should be closed. Other members suggested full closure as recommended by Simon Smith, and others suggested it should be coast wide.

It was noted that there is no monitoring of spawner index in fall in winter, after the commercial fishery closes in mid summer. Volunteer monitoring by commercial fishers may occur from year to year. It was suggested that a guideline be considered, that for important recreational fishing areas, if there is monitoring and the index is good then the areas would remain open, but if there is no monitoring that they would automatically go to closure or weekend fishing only to ensure conservation.

DFO indicated an interest in preparing a Recreational Harvest Plan as part of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. Ideas and concerns will be taken forward to next meeting of the SFAB Groundfish/Shellfish Sub-committee, January 25<sup>th</sup>. This will

include today's discussions of weekend opening/week day closures outside of commercial fishing season, industry interest in participation on board and subcommittee, mesh size in traps.

## **7. Harvest Agreements**

An update was provided by DFO on Harvest Agreements, interim treaty measures that had been considered by the federal Treaty Negotiation Unit for negotiation with Sliammon First Nation. The suggestion had been that their existing W licence would be subject to same timing and licence conditions as other commercial prawn licences with the exception of splitting 300 traps to more than one vessel as a means to increase participation and economic opportunity for more Band members. However, Sliammon First Nation held a ballot on the treaty process and the agreement in principle is not supported.

It was noted however, that other First Nations or the federal Treaty Negotiation Office may be interested in exploring Harvest Agreements in the near future, not just prawns but also other fisheries. DFO will provide advice and recommendations to treaty negotiating teams as may be required. There is time now for fishers to develop their comments and recommendations, to provide negotiators with advice early.

An industry representative noted that at the most recent TNAC meeting – the concept of harvest agreements was rejected. There was a general agreement among industry reps. that principles needed to be developed within TNAC forum.

## **8. Mike Cullen, Report from Industry Caucus Meeting Nov. 29.**

There was a discussion of funding arrangement for coming year. A majority of Industry representatives have recommended that licences should be reduced to a 250 trap limit, with the other 50 traps transferred to the Association. Licence holders could arrange to recover the 50 traps from the Association by making arrangements for funding to support the fishery. A number of motions had been put forward in the caucus meeting:

It had been moved that 50 traps be non-transferrable except back to the originating licence. Traps cannot be leased out or auctioned off to other licence holders. When/if agreement expires, return 50 traps to licence it came from. Vote passed unanimously.

It had been moved that 50 traps be non-transferrable with added safeguard that traps transfer from licence held by Prawn Association; 10 in favour 2 opposed.

It had been moved that there should not be a mail out to all licence holders; 9 in favour 3 opposed.

It had been moved that next season's fishing plan same be the same as last; 12 unanimous

With reference to the suggestion from DFO that new traps should not be introduced into the commercial fishery without prior testing, It had been moved that there should not be mandatory testing of new traps; 11 in favour 1 abstained.

DFO had recommended phasing out of solid sided traps. The caucus asked DFO to provide information about how many solid sided traps are still in use.

On Nov. 29, Mike Kattilakoski and Lorne Collicutt provided the prawn representatives with a presentation on remote data transfer systems using sat. and cell phones. DFO proposed a testing program on 4 vessels in the 2002 fishery, in remote areas. The program would test electronic transfer of spawner index information, but might also be used to provide closure notices back out to the fleet. DFO is prepared to provide equipment and all direct costs. This would require extra effort by industry service provider patrol personnel. Industry support was requested. The industry representatives advised that they had voted to work with DFO on this project. It was agreed that this would be included in the RFP to service providers.

The industry reps. had considered the problems with log books described by DFO, with respect to logging of haul time. They noted the cost involved for new log books. Revision with phased in adoption was recommended. Also, octopus data should be included on same page if possible. The logbook subcommittee may be reassembled to address this task.

DFO had identified to the industry reps. the question of using other vessels to haul gear to the grounds and between locations on the grounds. This is not prohibited in the prawn fishery as it is in the crab fishery. Industry reps. spoke of the safety issue for vessels transporting gear. They recommended no changes in this allowance, at this time.

DFO had expressed concern for bunching of web on the bottom of soft web traps, reducing in-water sorting capabilities during hauling. There was no resolution to this discussion.

DFO noted that the "one touch" provision in the 2001 fishery had caused some difficulties for fishers on the opening day, and then subsequently when fishers were moving gear. Industry reps. advised that this should be continued to ensure enforceability of the single haul provision.

There was discussion of time differences for 300 vs. stacked licences, and of earlier setting times suggested by some fishers. No changes were recommended.

Single haul compliance was discussed. Topics included peer pressure, electronic monitoring possibilities, depth recording devices for traps, stickers for buoys, reporting from fishing monitors, need for larger fines, letters from caucus for individual legal actions, licence sanction may only be determined by judges in court, internal fines imposed by the crab association in Area A, charges laid this season. There was a

request from industry for a more detailed list than was provided in the September meeting, types of charges and names of vessels where that was available.

## **9. Bacteria Issue**

Bacteria results from sampling this summer showed coliform bacteria. Results were referred to Health Canada for assessment. Health Canada does not consider it a health risk.

Program set up after commercial season, to take further samples

11 prawn samples taken in 123, no coliform present

37 taken in Gulf during Science Stock Assessment shrimp trawl stock assessment survey, 14% showed evidence of coliform bacteria including 3 sidestripe shrimp samples and 2 prawn samples. Coonstripe shrimp samples did not show coliform bacteria but too few samples to be definitive.

12 sample results reported for humpback shrimp trap samples from Prince Rupert Harbour, 8 had coliform bacteria – some additional samples expected (all bait).

20 prawn samples from Howe Sound Stock Assessment fall survey, collected and in storage – need funds for analysis.

Notes were provided from the Nov. XXX meeting of the industry subcommittee chaired by Guy Johnston, that is working on this issue. There is progress on understanding of issue. Purging tests are underway. Unique characteristics of seal faeces were described. There is interest in ozone systems. CFIA and Fishery Officers have been asked for advice on former fish hold inspection program. Advisory documents will be prepared before next season.

## **10. Recommendations for 2002 Fishery**

## **11. Commercial Fishery Harvest Plan Development Schedule**

The goal is to prepare the draft by the end of December, for distribution to industry reps. and First Nations for input. Licence renewal may occur earlier if approval and sign off stages can be advanced. Commercial fishery will commence May 1.

## **12. Other Business**

Collaborative agreement – Department received \$85,000.00 for in-season stock assessment, in-season fishery management and enforcement. \$14,000.00 of enforcement funds not used in-season. Residual funds to be returned to association (by Jan. 31, 2002) as required by collaborative agreement. Association has committed to

providing refunds to license holders. Although some reps. would favour allowing Conservation and Protection to pursue post-season enforcement activities, the strong commitment previously made for the licence holder refund will be honoured.

Todd Johanssen, DFO Port Hardy has been asked by provincial authorities to provide map information on locations of prawn fishery, to avoid aquaculture siting problems. Locations shown on map are not accurate. Licence holder input is requested.

Randy Webb is reviewing shellfish aquaculture proposals in Baynes Sound. Providing information about potential conflicts with the prawn fishery is difficult due to confidentiality requirements. This makes it hard to protect the areas.

Chris Marshman noted that the Marine Resource Advisory committee in Powell River had also been involved in developing maps for aquaculture siting. Fisherman contacted who fish areas.

NIPA affirmed and it was noted that this organization is in favour of an industry wide ballot on the issue of trap reduction from 300 to 250 traps and transfer of traps to a new licence issued to the Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association.

On question, DFO advised that new trap tags are not required by DFO for 2002, the tag numbers can be carried forward from year to year. However, fishers may be interested in new tags to ensure that they don't have any trouble with tag breakage in season. It was noted that crab tags are still good after 1 year in place on traps.

No other business.

### **13. Next Meeting**

Thursday April 4, 2002, 10:30 – 16:00