

Prawn Sectoral Committee and Prawn Research Committee

Draft Minutes, Sept. 14, 2004, Coast Bastion Hotel, Nanaimo

The commercial season began May 1 and closed July 2. At 63 days, this was the shortest commercial fishing season on record. The commercial in-season management procedures were summarized. The commercial fishery commenced May 1. J.O. Thomas Ltd. had observers deployed throughout the coast. In-season, DFO managers, Stock Assessment staff and D. Tallman of J.O. Thomas have a conference call every Friday morning. Spawner index data collected by on-ground monitors is sent to J.O.T. who compiles and forwards it to DFO Stock Assessment. DFO StAD analyzes the data and forwards summaries to fishery managers. The Friday conference call reviews information from north to south, through the inside waters and then west coast Vancouver Island. For each statistical Area, the call commences with information from hails about fishing vessel effort distribution and changes since the preceding week. Stock Assessment reviews the index data that has been received. Fishery managers contribute comments or information which they have received from fishers and buyers. D. Tallman provides comments received from the on grounds monitor for the area in question. A decision is made on sub-areas that need closure. If managers cannot agree on a closure, then the default decision is to close so that if an error is made, it will be in favour of the resource. The need and schedule for additional observer sampling for each statistical Area is determined and J.O. T. is requested to implement the sampling requirements identified by managers and Stock Assessment. On occasion, managers will attempt to get additional comments from fishers following the meeting, or D. Tallman may be requested to seek additional sample results or comments from the observers across the weekend, in which case a decision may be delayed until the following Monday. Then, the next Area of the coast is reviewed in the same manner. This occurs each Friday until the season is closed coast wide.

2004 Commercial Season Review – J.O. Thomas Ltd., D. Tallman

This was the 4th year that J.O. Thomas has provided prawn and trap fishery service. There are 4 components; trap tags, hails, vessel compliance inspections and spawner index samples.

Tags: 89,500 tags were purchased. 185 single sets for 300 traps were issued and 33 stacked licence sets for 500 traps were issued, for a total of 218 vessels active in the fishery. 3 replacement sets were issued in-season. 3 sets of tags have been issued for the humpback trap fishery in Prince Rupert harbour which commenced Sept. 1.

Hails: fishing vessel activity/location hails commenced April 22. There were 828 hails, similar to previous years. There have been 7 hails for humpback shrimp trap fishing in Prince Rupert harbour. Hails will continue to be taken for the Prince Rupert and Massett humpback trap fisheries, and the Nov. Dec. Sooke coonstripe trap fishery, until calendar year end.

Vessel inspections: There were 224 vessel inspections. 215 of the 218 active vessels were inspected. 2 vessels left the fishery before inspections could be undertaken, and 1 vessel was not inspected to prevent interference with an investigation by DFO enforcement personnel.

Spawner index samples: 1594 spawner index samples were taken by on-grounds observers, 29 more than last year. This was 200 to 400 more samples than were taken in previous years. 213

of 218 active vessels were sampled. There was an average of 2.2 boardings per vessel, with an average of 7.5 strings sampled per vessel. Sampling was provided by 11 vessels and masters deployed coast wide. Many of the on-grounds monitors have been with the prawn program for 10 years, and all have been involved for the past 3 years representing a considerable experience. There was a 1 day observer workshop at the J.O.T. office in April that included rockfish identification this year with the assistance of DFO port sampler Sean XXX and logbook updates provided by Leslie Barton of DFO Stock Assessment. All observers were tested for index sampling accuracy. The distribution of monitors on the coast was described. 190 days of on-grounds monitoring was budgeted for northern waters and 325 days for southern waters (rel. to Cape Caution). 187 were used in the north and 294 in the south, reflecting the shorter fishing season this year. Sampling commenced early in Howe Sd., Saanich Inlet and Alberni Inlet as requested by DFO (ed. note, DFO personnel did first week sampling in Stuart Channel). Monitoring was front end loaded to establish the early season baseline. 2004 was the highest sampling intensity since this program commenced, with approximately 25 samples per day coastwide compared to 20 per day in 2003 and less than 15 per day in previous years. This year's budget was affected by rising vessel fuel costs estimated at an additional \$6,000.

2004 Commercial Season Review – Industry Representatives

The following comments were tabled:

The 2004 season catch was down from 2003. There is concern among fishers for the reduction in the season length. There are concerns for the erosion of the single haul restriction, it appears that more boats are engaged in double hauling in all areas of the coast. Enforceability of single haul was questioned. Improvement is necessary. Electronic monitoring by 2005 was recommended by some representatives as a solution. Another spoke against the daily time limits (7 to 7) and suggested that e-monitoring will provide flexibility. Improperly buoyed gear was seen in-season. A representative indicated that most fishers managed to make their season. Although catches were down, prices increased. Shortening of the season is a common concern. Increased presence of Conservation and Protection personnel was noted favourably. Another group supports e-monitoring to limit double hauling. A representative indicated that the short season was detrimental to markets. A reduced stock abundance was noted in some areas. Another representative stated that a change in the management system is needed. The need for change to achieve improvements in the fishery appeared to be a common view among many of the representatives.

2004 Commercial Season Review – DFO Stock Assessment & Management

The season started on time this year (ed. note, 4 day opening delay last year). Stock Assessment advised that the timing of conference calls can be difficult as data is still arriving the evening before or in the morning prior to the calls. However, all data is used in-season and late data is preferable to an absence of data. Double hauling is a wide spread concern in northern waters. There were also several incidents of fishing in a closed area in the north. Fishers had some issues with closures in Areas 9 and 10. The Area 12 fishery was significantly different this year. Early stock weakness was found in portions of 12. J.O.T. was complemented for their efforts to respond to DFO's requests for substantial in-season monitoring in this area. DFO noted receiving a number of complaints about double hauling in central coast this year. In southern waters, it soon became apparent that it was not a record season like 2003. At opening, most

vessels were active in Area 12 and the Gulf. There was increased effort this year on the west coast of Vancouver Island. There were early closures in Area 23 this year. There were more complaints of double hauling in southern areas. Ahousaht and Kyuquot expressed concern for increased effort in their territories. Recreational concerns were noted for Areas 14, 16 and 17. Howe Sound had increased effort at opening, but half of the boats moved out in a short time. There were several boats fishing Indian Arm. There was good co-operation from fishers who were requested to move out of portions of Howe Sound in advance of closures. Central Gulf Areas were managed differently this year to allow waters near Thrasher Rock to remain open longer. There were no complaints received from the commercial sector regarding the timing and appropriateness of the coast wide closure, July 02. Fishers were thanked for their in-season calls and comments and were encouraged to continue to input into the process prior to the Friday AM in-season management conference calls in future seasons.

2004 Commercial Season Review – DFO Conservation and Protection

Regionally there were 138 dedicated prawn patrols during the 2004 commercial season, resulting in 735 hours on the water. Typically this results in almost the same amount of administrative time in reports, charges and court duties. There were 39 occurrence reports and 22 violations. Some are multiple violations for one individual or vessel. There were 9 reports of fishing by unlicensed vessels, 15 reports for illegal gear, 6 reports of fishing in closed areas or outside of time restrictions, 2 vessels not hailed, 2 reports of gear conflict, and 4 reports of undersized prawn retention. Some reports are forwarded to the RCMP, typically damage to gear, floats, theft and threats.

There were 22 violations: 3 persons without fisher registration cards, 3 logbook violations, 3 double haul of which one is a second charge in which a more severe penalty will be requested, some minor charges related to gear, 1 failure to mark gear, 4 undersize prawns, and 1 closed area violation is under review by Crown.

In northern waters there was an increased emphasis on patrols. Large patrol boats are highly visible. Their patrol hours are not included in the summary as they are patrolling multiple fisheries. Personnel are also set off on beaches to watch for double hauling. A closed area violation led to investigation of fraudulent logbook information which is now under review by Crown. There are also about 2 flights per week in northern areas. Information about which vessels to pay attention to can be helpful. The reports of enforcement concerns come from both other fishers and from the on-grounds monitors. DFO can provide “ORR report cards” which indicate the type of information that is helpful to include. See action items.

In general discussion the Committee was advised that Fishery Officer strength is being further reduced in some areas. A person had been caught in Saanich Inlet and charged for fishing too many traps under a recreational licence. The practice of large patrol vessels announcing their location was questioned. This is a requirement of their Search and Rescue duties. Concern was expressed for the potential for occurrence reports that may be made without justification by another fisher, but which can end up being referred to subsequently in court which may be misleading. An Officer advised that this can lead to charges for public mischief against the party making misleading reports.

2004 Commercial Season Review – First Nation Comments

First Nation representatives from Kitkatla, Tseshaht and Owekeeno advised that they were attending to gain increased understanding of how the commercial fishery is managed. No specific concerns were identified. Earlier, DFO personnel had spoken of concerns raised by Ahousaht and Kyuquot. One of the views expressed by a FN representative was in the words of one of their Chiefs “there is enough out there for everyone – let’s share it!”

2004 Commercial Season and Post-Season Review – Sports Fishing Advisory Board

Port Alberni, Saanich and Stuart Channel recreational fishers reported extremely poor returns after the commercial opening. Saanich Inlet continues to be poor fishing to the present. An example was provided of 30 to 50 prawns caught in a 5 hour soak using 4 to 8 traps. A representative had watched a commercial fisher collect about 20 prawns per trap near Tent Island, and commented that what might be adequate for commercial fishing due to the number of traps that are hauled, may be insufficient to provide a satisfactory recreational fishing experience. He noted that when fishing was good 5 years ago, that 100 to 150 prawns could be caught in 5 hours. There is an abundance problem with prawns now in these areas. Prior to this commercial season, SFAB representatives had suggested increasing the spawner index in high use areas. There were disappointed that no change in index management levels had been adopted. The Committee was advised that local sports fishing committees will be coming forward this fall with motions for non-commercial reserves to improve fishing opportunity. Reduced post commercial season catches were also reported for Area 14 (Comox) and in Alberni Canal.

It was noted that an ad hoc recreational/commercial group had been active in March and April, and that the Prawn Industry Caucus and Association had sent a letter to the Regional Director General indicating industry interest in continuing the dialogue. The Chair will discuss this further with the parties, and will arrange for a meeting Oct. 26 if all sides believe this may prove useful.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING – DENNIS RUTHERFORD, CHAIR

June PSARC (Pacific Scientific Advice Review Committee) Paper Review

D. Rutherford and H. Nguyen had submitted a paper to the June invertebrate PSARC meeting, reviewing double ring trap efficiency and considering how bait may affect spawner index monitoring. The development of the spawner index measure from fishery independent studies was described, using SAK traps and herring in Knight Inlet, and more recently with the DFO surveys in Howe Sound using tuna cat food bait. The fishery is managed on the basis of in-season fishery dependant sampling with a variety of traps and new bait types. In order to compare results to the original index, data must be standardized which is done by applying correction factors based on measurements of relative efficiency. The June PSARC paper reported on comparisons of double ring traps to SAK 3 tunnel traps, and also reported comparisons of pellet bait to DFO standard canned tuna bait. The testing was done with 20 traps on a groundline, alternating the two types of bait or two types of trap, for 15 sets. In addition to testing undertaken in Howe Sound in Nov. 2003 and Feb. 2004, double ring trap test data collected from Saanich Inlet in 1997 was also reported.

Pellet bait caught 1.27 times as much large prawns as canned tuna bait. Overall, the double ring traps caught 1.16 times as much large prawns as SAK traps. For trap testing, a bigger difference was seen in the results from Saanich Inlet than in Howe Sound. However, the Saanich Inlet test was done with both the double ring traps and the pellet bait, simultaneously. It is not known if the combination of bait and trap changes may be additive, multiplicative or of no increased effect if both the trap and the bait are modified. The PSARC committee requested that the data on trap effects be re-analyzed without including the Saanich Inlet data. When that was done, the remaining Howe Sound data was insufficient to show a statistically significant effect of the double ring traps.

The outcome is that beginning in 2005, the pellet bait correction factor of 1.27 will be used to analyze the spawner index data collected during the fishing season. However, the correction factor of 1.2 which had been used for the past several years for double ring traps will no longer apply. The net change in correction factors of .07 will be negligible in terms of its effect on in-season data results. Further testing of the double ring traps will occur this year in the fall and winter Howe Sound surveys.

Questions and discussion of several points followed: potential effect of juvenile abundance on efficiency comparisons; aggressive feeding by younger age classes; availability of trap inventory data collected by on grounds observers this year; pellets attracting prawns away from tuna baited traps in the alternating trap test configuration; mesh size of test traps; a suggestion that the new trap/bait configuration be tested against the original Pardiack/herring combination used to establish the first index; the effect of other improved efficiencies in plotters, GPS and vessel improvements; changes in fleet average catch characteristics in the last 10 years; stock problems haven't shown up – are they anticipated; how many years are required to determine if the correction factors are sufficient. Stock assessment was requested to do a retrospective analysis – if the bait correction factor had been applied this year, what would have been the effect?

Fall Spawner Index Survey Preparations

Fall index surveys are planned in 12 coastal areas (ed's. note, reduced to 10). The selection process is underway. Some changes had been recommended for extending the survey in Barkley Sound and changing location from Muchalat Inlet to Nootka Sound. These proposals will be further considered for next year. Further advice on changes is requested of both commercial fishers and from recreational fishing representatives. There was a question and discussion of how areas should be surveyed – find the prawns and stay on them, direct effort to recreational gear even though those may not be the best prawn areas, or distribute the survey throughout the area. Stock Assessment advised that sampling should be distributed and broadly representative. It was asked if fishers selecting the sample locations could bias the results. A bias in favour of prawn abundance might occur as the fishers are interested in recovering expenses, and may occur as prawns have had time to concentrate following the commercial fishing season. A bias to low prawn abundance areas was considered unlikely, as fishers would not recover survey expenses. Stock assessment has looked at maps of sample locations in past fall surveys and had been satisfied with the distribution.

Meeting closed.

NEXT MEETING

Prawn Sectoral Committee and Research Committee. Monday Oct. 25. Location TBA.
 Recreational/Commercial ad hoc Group. Tuesday Oct. 26 – to be confirmed.
 Industry Caucus – Future Management Options. Tuesday Oct. 26. Coast Bastion. Time TBA.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Production of minutes of the meeting. JM.
2. Letter to Committee members, re future management. JM
3. Bruce Burrows, Owekeeno requested summary information for Areas 8 and 9. JM.
4. ORR report cards to be provided to all licence holders. JM.
5. Start e-mail exchange among members of rec/comm ad hoc committee to determine if the Oct. 26 meeting should proceed. JM.
6. Send in-season spawner index sample results to committee members. Note, start with important recreational fishing areas & check with reps. about other areas. JM or MK.
7. Retrospective analysis of correction factor effect if it had been applied to the 2004 commercial fishing season. DR.
8. Provide complete list of fall survey subareas to W. Harling. DR. [completed 9/17/04].

ATTENDEES

Jim Morrison, DFO Nanaimo	Byron Koke, DFO Comox
Larry Paiké, DFO C&P, Victoria	Thomas Hlavic, DFO C&P, North Coast
Beth Pechter, DFO Prince Rupert	Dennis Rutherford DFO StAD PBS
Bridget Ennevor, DFO Delta	Guy Parker, DFO Campbell River
Dan Clark, DFO Nanaimo	Mike Kattilakoski, DFO Nanaimo
Dennis Chalmers, MAFF/BC	

Wayne Harling, SFAB	Paul Rickard, SFAB
Chuck Ashcroft, SFAB	

Guy Johnston, Bill Stefiuk Group	Kim Mikkelsen, Powell River Prawn Group
Tom Orr, North Island Prawn Association	Kelly Loxton, North Island Prawn Association
Mike Cullen, B.C. Prawn Fishermens' Group	Kevin Erikson, Pro Quota Group
Brad Bradley, B.C. Prawn Fishermens' Group	Lou Kiselich, Steveston Prawn Group
Paul Bevandick, Steveston Prawn Group	Bob Alford, Mid Island Prawn Group
Chris Sporer, PPFA	Rochelle Fairfield, Pres. PPFA

Greg McKay, Kitkatla Fishing Program	Russell Lewis, Kitkatla Band Council
Willy Sam Sr., Tseshah First Nation	Bruce Burrows, Owekeeno First Nation

Doug Tallman, J.O.T.	Hank Buitendyk, PCFS
Jason Scherr, AMR	

Mike Jensen	Tom Thompson
Jim Williams	