



Prawn Newsletter



From The Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association

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Letter From the President

Paul Bevandick

President

The PPFA conducted its first government lobbying trips in November. The PPFA spent November 6th - 8th in Victoria and November 20th - 23rd in Ottawa meeting politicians and senior government officials.

The purpose of these trips was to introduce our industry and outline some of the key issues. Our message was one of optimism and that we want to work with people. As a result of these trips, we have now started to develop key relationships; important decision makers know who we are and understand our issues. Many politicians expressed an interest in helping us out whenever possible.

While in Ottawa our Monday discussions on the use of SLICE at fish farms brought about a telephone call from DFO on Tuesday, and by Wednesday we were discussing the need to determine the impacts of SLICE on prawn stocks with DFO scientists. This was encouraging and hopefully we will be able to make progress on this issue in the coming months.

It is important to note that some officials asked questions about the fishery, alluding that commercial fisheries are merely EI stamp fisheries. I advised these officials that most prawn fishermen fish for other species throughout the year and are more business-minded than that. EI isn't good for the industry's reputation in the public.

Maldwyn Thomas (PPFA lobbyist) and Chris Sporer (PPFA Executive Director) were both working 12 - 14 hours throughout the trips to ensure all meetings went smoothly. The lobbying trips were money well spent and we have started key relationships that we can now build upon.

Prawn fishermen should recognize that vessel stability continues to be a serious issue within our fleet. Vessel stability was one of the topics discussed at the last Prawn Sectoral Committee meeting. I encourage all prawn fishermen to take the vessel stability course being offered through FishSafe.



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Chris Sporer, Executive Director

2006 Lobbying Trips

In November the PPFA conducted its first lobbying trips to Victoria and Ottawa. The purpose of these trips was to introduce the ourselves to politicians and government officials, educate them about the sound, well-managed commercial prawn fishery and inform them about some of our key issues.

The PPFA was well received in both Victoria and Ottawa and can now build on the relationships that have been established by meeting regularly with federal political leaders and officials to keep abreast of the evolution of key issues and to present positions on matters of importance to the industry.

The following are summaries of the two trips prepared by our lobbyist, outlining who we met and what we discussed.

Victoria Trip

The Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association visited Victoria November 6 – 8, 2006 to introduce the fishery and to hold discussions on pertinent issues with political leaders and officials of relevance to the industry.

During their visit, the PPFA mission met with 19 political leaders and officials, including the Minister of the Environment (responsible for fisheries), the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Minister for Advanced Education, political assistants to the ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Agriculture and Lands and Economic Development, and MLAs with an interest in fishing issues, in particular the Official Opposition Fisheries Critic and Chair of the Special Legislative Committee on Aquaculture and the Vice-Chair of the same committee, as well as senior officials in the Ministries of Aboriginal Affairs and

Reconciliation, Agriculture and Lands, Economic Development, the Environment and the Secretariat for Intergovernmental Affairs.

Issues raised in Victoria included security of access to the resource, aboriginal treaty negotiations, marine habitat protection, aquaculture, federal Species at Risk Act (SARA), DFO's "Ocean-to-Plate" strategy, commercial/recreational allocation, BC fisheries strategy and federal fisheries reform, heli-logging and prawn marketing initiatives.

The mission expressed its appreciation for the support of the BC government on specific issues, particularly in dealing with Ottawa, and encouraged the provincial government to remain involved in issues of importance to the fishery and to continue to provide support for industry positions. Discussion of specific issues was as follows:

Security of Access to the Resource:

This topic was central to the discussion of all the other issues. PPFA underlined the importance of the well-being of the prawn fishery, and emphasized that a healthy commercial prawn industry was vital to the economic success of many coastal communities and contributes to the economy of BC. If government allows the fishery to be damaged, this affects all participants in the fishery, regardless of whether they are native or non-native.

Aboriginal Treaty Negotiations:

While PPFA acknowledged that governments intend to settle aboriginal treaty claims, it emphasized the importance of effecting licence transfers through free negotiations between willing sellers and willing buyers and of ensuring that both

native and non-native fishermen will operate under the same set of rules and regulations.

PPFA wished to ensure that it be consulted on fisheries questions relating to aboriginal treaty negotiations, including the determination of aboriginal treaty commercial harvest agreements. The PPFA noted that governments always say that the intent is converge native treaty commercial and non-native commercial fisheries at some point in the future. The PPFA advised that all participants must operate under the same rules and regulations and any convergence should be achieved prior to the finalization of treaties.

While there was some uncertainty about the extent to which fisheries would be integrated, BC officials agreed unanimously with the concept of a level playing field and fair compensation and supported the concept of consultations prior to allocation decisions.

Aquaculture:

PPFA focused on two concerns: siting of aquaculture operations and the possible harmful effects of the use of SLICE on prawn populations located near some fish farms. The use of SLICE was defended by BC officials. However, they acknowledged the legitimacy of PPFA concerns and agreed that independent, peer-reviewed scientific research be conducted into the SLICE issue. Government officials promised to look further into the matter and work with the prawn industry towards a solution.

Marine Habitat Protection:

PPFA expressed its general dissatisfaction over the apparent lack of coordination of federal marine habitat protection initiatives and its concern about the extent and purposes of the Southern Gulf of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area

(NMCA). The association was concerned about the possibility of a proliferation of total closures and noted that any such closures would devastate the commercial fishery.

BC officials said they were opposed to progressive closure of the seabed to human activity. They were seeking to engage DFO and other federal government agencies more fully in consultations in order to achieve pragmatic solutions. The PPFA was advised that the Premier was especially concerned about protecting BC interests in the process.

Species at Risk Act (SARA):

Although the fishery was not directly affected by SARA at this point, PPFA continued to be concerned by the potential for dangerous SARA decisions. The association acknowledged the interventions of the BC government under the SARA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ottawa and hoped the province would continue to intervene with the federal government. While BC officials were supportive, one senior official expressed concern that environmental activist pressure for strict implementation was increasing and thought it would be difficult for any government to modify the SARA legislation.

Commercial/Recreational Allocation:

PPFA reported on the collaborative initiative it was engaged in with the recreational sector and noted aboriginal participation in the process.

BC Fisheries Strategy and Possible Amendments to the Federal Fisheries Act:

BC officials confirmed that they were still working on the new provincial fisheries strategy. Elements likely to appear in the strategy included: the appropriate balance

between conservation and economic objectives, third-party certification, aboriginal participation and the achievement of greater provincial influence over federal fisheries policies. They hoped to be able to provide industry with more information in the next few months.

Officials hoped the provincial strategy would assist BC in discussing future changes to the federal Fisheries Act with Ottawa. For the time being DFO was keeping information very close to its chest and BC was unsure if the federal government would be able to meet its own deadlines for tabling reforms to the Act before parliament this fall.

Heli-Logging:

PPFA expressed its concerns about the potential impact of this activity on the fishery and expressed disappointment that the industry was not being consulted earlier in the process. BC officials indicated their readiness to cooperate with PPFA on the issue.

Marketing Development and the DFO “Ocean to Plate” Initiative:

PPFA reported that the industry is interested in marketing strategies and what they could mean for the prawn industry. The BC official in charge encouraged PPFA to take advantage of existing federal and provincial programs to develop new markets for prawn and agreed on the usefulness of market diversification. Possibilities for participation in seafood fairs in Boston, Brussels, Spain and China were outlined.

It was agreed that seafood promotion has tended to be overlooked in Ottawa and officials shared PPFA concern that the DFO “Ocean-to-Plate initiative should be focused on both the east and west coasts. This

initiative was seen as being linked to the traceability issue, an issue that was growing in importance due to market demands.

Federal-Provincial Relations:

PPFA commended the BC government for the initiatives it had taken and for the improvement it had achieved in federal-provincial relations and hoped that the BC authorities would continue to engage actively with Ottawa on issues of importance to the fishery. BC officials confirmed that the improvement in relations had been the result of a very conscious decision taken by the Premier. Officials indicated that they would continue, in a non-confrontational way, to press Ottawa on a variety of issues, including those discussed with the PPFA.

Conclusions:

The PPFA mission was well received in Victoria at senior levels. Mission members began the process of sensitizing relevant provincial decision-makers to the Pacific prawn fishery’s achievements and issues and of securing its reputation as a viable, progressive, sustainably managed industry that makes a significant contribution to the BC economy and to the social fabric of the province.

The BC government shares the broad objectives of the Pacific prawn industry and officials and political leaders supported PPFA positions on specific issues. Among other things, the provincial government appears to recognize the importance of a viable prawn industry to the future of the aboriginal treaties.

The BC government has established an effective working relationship with Ottawa and in this context also provides useful support to the PPFA on specific issues of

importance to the industry. PPFA should continue to work with the BC authorities on matters involving federal government policies.

In the course of the discussions, the mission obtained useful information about the evolution of key issues, both at the provincial and federal levels.

Meetings:

Office of the Premier: Secretariat for Intergovernmental Relations

The Hon. John Van Dongen
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

Ms. Virginia Greene
Deputy Minister

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation

Mr. Joel McLaughlin
Assistant to the Honourable Michael de Jong

Ms. Terry Simonsen
Director – Policy
Strategic Initiatives Division

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Ms. Lisa Wilkinson
Executive Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands

Mr. Harvey Sasaki
Assistant Deputy Minister
Risk Management and Competitiveness Division

Mr. Rob Paynter
Manager – Marine Planning Office
Strategic Initiatives Division
Integrated Land Management Bureau

Ministry of Economic Development

Mr. Alex McMillan
Assistant to the Honourable Colin Hansen

Mr. Mark Gillis
Director

Ms. Janice Mansfield
Economic Strategies Branch
Economic Competition Division
Ministry of the Environment

The Hon. Barry Penner
Minister of the Environment

Chris Trumpy
Deputy Minister

Mr. Bud Graham
Assistant Deputy Minister – Oceans and Marine Fisheries

Ms. Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Ms. Lorraine Saunders
Seafood Coordinator
Fish and Seafood Development

Other Political Leaders and Members of the Legislative Assembly

The Hon. Murray Coel
MLA – North Saanich, the Islands (Liberal)
Minister of Advanced Education

Mr. Robin Austin
MLA – Skeena (NDP)
Official Opposition Fisheries Critic
Chair of the Special Legislative Committee on Aquaculture

Mr. Kenn McLaren
Caucus Research – NDP

Mr. Ron Cantelon
MLA – Nanaimo – Parksville (Liberal)
Vice-Chair – Special Legislative Committee
on Aquaculture

Ottawa Trip

A senior-level mission from the Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association visited Ottawa November 20 – 23, 2006.

During their visit, the PPFA mission met with 37 political leaders and officials, including the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, political advisers to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of International Trade, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Chair and the Deputy Chairs of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and senior officials in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Issues raised in Ottawa included security of access to the resource, aboriginal treaty negotiations, fisheries reform, DFO funding, marine habitat protection, the commercial/recreational allocation, SARA and marketing. Discussion of specific issues was as follows:

Security of Access to the Resource:

This topic was central to the discussion of all other issues. PPFA stressed the importance of security of access for the well-being of the commercial prawn fishery.

Aboriginal Treaty Negotiations:

While PPFA accepted aboriginal treaties will be settled, it emphasized the importance of effecting licence transfers through free negotiations between willing sellers and buyers and of ensuring that both native fisheries and non-native fisheries operated under the same set of rules and regulations. PPFA also wished to ensure that it be consulted on fisheries questions relating to aboriginal treaty negotiations.

The mission also reported that an umbrella organization of coastal aboriginal bands has indicated its willingness to accept regular commercial fishing licences and fish under the same rules and regulations, a development which would provide a solution that would work for all parties.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and officials assured the mission that stakeholder consultation was an important part of the treaty process. There was general agreement in Ottawa that it would be useful for PPFA to work with coastal aboriginal groups which had shown an interest in participating in the fishery, under the same rules and regulations.

Aquaculture:

The mission raised its concerns about the siting of fish farms and about the possible impact of SLICE on prawn populations, asked that it be consulted prior to siting decisions being taken, and called for peer-reviewed scientific research into the SLICE issue.

The Minister and the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans responded positively to the mission's representations and, as a result, officials from the DFO Aquaculture Science Branch and the DFO Aquaculture Management Branch met with the mission to

discuss collaborative arrangements for conducting scientific research into the SLICE issue.

Fisheries Reform:

Minister Hearn informed the mission that internal work on the new Act had been completed and that DFO would shortly begin stakeholder consultations.

DFO Funding:

The mission emphasized that the solution developed by DFO in response to the Larocque court decision would impact significantly on PPFA's ability to fund its activities.

PPFA also raised its concerns about difficulties DFO had encountered in carrying out its enforcement functions due to a lack of funding and insufficiencies it perceived in the DFO science budget.

Minister Hearn and officials recognized the nature of the problems and indicated they wished to discuss funding issues, including the consequences of the Larocque decision, with the fishing fleets. The Minister also said he attached importance to funding scientific research that was relevant to the needs of the fisheries.

Marine Habitat Protection:

Minister Hearn expressed understanding for PPFA concerns about federal marine habitat protection initiatives, particularly the lack of coordination and uncertainties about the extent and purpose of the proposed southern Gulf of Georgia NMCA. DFO officials were already aware of similar concerns from other fishing industries, acknowledged the need for greater "cohesion" in policies and assured the mission that the Department would look further into the matter.

While it is uncertain whether the Conservative government will continue the Oceans Action Plan (formerly the Oceans Strategy) past 2007, officials asserted that the DFO minister now has the authority to lead inside government on oceans-related issues and that Mr. Hearn has a strong personal interest in various aspects of Fisheries Act reform.

The mission also had an opportunity to respond to questions from Environmental Canada officials about bycatch and trap design.

Commercial/Recreational Allocation:

The mission reported on its positive experience in working with the recreational sector, expressing the hope that DFO would continue to support this work and respect the sharing arrangements in place. The Minister assured the PPFA that DFO would live up to its commitments and recognized that appropriate sharing arrangement contributed to security and certainty in the fishery.

Species at Risk Act (SARA):

The mission expressed concern that SARA listings to protect other species could impact negatively on the prawn fishery. Minister Hearn shared PPFA concerns and agreed that SARA should be implemented in a reasonable way. It would also appear that DFO is now playing a more important role on SARA issues affecting fisheries. However, dealing with COSEWIC continues to be a problem (PPFA pressed for the involvement of DFO PSARC in the COSEWIC process).

Marketing:

Agriculture Canada officials advised of the possibility of using federal government (CAFI program) funding for market exploration initiatives to help serve existing

markets better and to identify opportunities for diversification and urged the Association to include pre-market strategy development in its application for funding. Officials also assured the mission that the DFO “Ocean-to-Plate” initiative would be managed in a balanced fashion.

Conclusions:

The PPFA mission undertook an extensive program of useful discussions in Ottawa and was well received by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and by other political leaders and key officials. With this visit, the mission the PPFA began the process of sensitizing relevant federal decision-makers to the prawn fishery’s achievements and of securing its reputation as a viable, progressive, sustainably managed industry that makes a worthwhile contribution to the Canadian economy and to the social fabric of British Columbia.

The broad objectives of the Pacific prawn industry were widely shared by the new Conservative government and officials and political leaders, in particular DFO Minister Hearn, supported PPFA positions on specific issues. In the course of the discussions, the mission obtained useful information about the evolution of issues at the federal level

Issues on which the mission met with support in Ottawa, both within government and the opposition, included its stance on aboriginal treaty negotiations, including its wish to be consulted on allocations, its concerns about federal marine habitat protection initiatives, its concerns about the potential impact of SARA listings, its desire for continued DFO support on the commercial/recreational process, and its wish to be consulted on fisheries reform. DFO also agreed to collaborate with PPFA in undertaking scientific research into the SLICE issue and responded with

understanding to the mission’s concerns about funding challenges at DFO, including the need for an appropriate response to the Larocque court decision.

Officials welcomed PPFA interest in the possibility of using matching federal government funding for market development purposes and offered their support to the industry.

Political leaders and officials met by the mission expressed their interest in maintaining contact with the PPFA and several of them intend to visit the fishery when they are in British Columbia. The Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has also indicated he would be pleased to have the PPFA appear before his committee at some point in the future.

Meetings:

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Mr. Laurie Throness
Chief of Staff to the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mr. Chad Shaver
Special Assistant to the Minister

Ms. Sheila Jones
Director
Sectoral Industry Services Bureau

Mr. David Anderson
MP – Saskatchewan (Conservative)
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Mr. Michael Presley
Director General
Food Value Chain Bureau

Ms. Lauren Lavigne
Marketing and Trade Officer, Vancouver

Environment Canada

Ms. Jasmine Igniski
Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of the
Environment

Mr. Liam Stone
Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of the
Environment (SARA)

Ms. Michele Brenning
Director General
Canadian Wildlife Service

Mr. Steve Wendt
Director
Migratory Birds

Mr. Gregory Thompson
Director
Species at Risk

Mr. Bob Ellner
Environment Canada, Vancouver

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The Honourable Loyola Hearn
Minister

Mr. Randy Kamp
MP – Pitt Meadows – Maple Ridge
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of
Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. Larry Murray
Deputy Minister

Mr. David Bevan
Assistant Deputy Minister
Fisheries and Aquaculture Management

Ms. Michaela Huard
Assistant Deputy Minister
Policy

Dr. William G. Doubleday
Director General
Economic Analysis and Statistics
Policy Sector

Ms. Sue Kirby
Assistant Deputy Minister
Oceans

Mr. Brian Torrie
Director
Habitat Program Services Branch
Habitat Management Directorate

Mr. David Balfour
Director General
Aboriginal Policy and Governance

Ms. Rose Marie Karnes
Executive Director
Aboriginal Programs
Aboriginal Policy and Governance

Mr. Denis Rivard
Associate Director General
Science

Dr. Sharon E. McGladdery
National Science Advisor Aquatic Animal
Health
Aquaculture Science Branch

Ms. Amy Williams
Program Development Officer
Aquaculture Management Directorate

International Trade Canada

Mr. Lawrence M. Malloy
Chief of Staff
Office of the Minister of International Trade

Ms. Priya Joshi
Special Assistant
Office of the Minister of International Trade

Natural Resources Canada

Mr. John Flemming
Special Assistant to the Minister of Natural
Resources

Other Political Leaders

Senator William Rompkey –
Newfoundland/Labrador (Liberal)
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on
Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. John Gough
Research and Writing
Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and
Oceans

Mr. Raynald Blais
MP – (Bloc Québécois)
Vice-Chair of the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Fisheries & Oceans

Mr. John Cummins
MP – Delta- Richmond East

Mr. Gerald Keddy
MP – South Shore – St. Margarets N.S.
(Conservative)
Chair of the House of Commons Standing
Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. James Lunney
MP – Nanaimo – Alberni (Conservative)
Member of the House of Commons Standing
Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

The Honourable Lawrence McAulay
MP – Cardigan – PEI (Liberal)
Member of the House of Commons Standing
Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. Bob Mills
MP – Red Deer (Conservative)
Chair of the House of Commons Standing
Committee on the Environment and
Sustainable Development

Mr. Peter Stoffer
MP – Sackville – Eastern Shore – Nova
Scotia (NDP)
Member of the House of Commons Standing
Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Prawn Sectoral Committee November 28th Meeting Summary

A Prawn Sectoral Committee meeting was held on November 28th at the Coast Bastion Inn in Nanaimo. The following is a summary of the meeting. JO Thomas & Associates Ltd. will be producing formal minutes of the meeting.

A) Introductions

Due to weather conditions (snow) the meeting was not as well attended as in the past. For the most part it was the same representatives as in the past; however, the Cowichan Tribes have now sent a representative to the last two Sectoral meetings so their presence may become a regular occurrence.

B) Monitoring the Ocean

The Sectoral was provide with presentations of three scientific initiatives for monitoring the ocean.

The first presentation was by researchers from the University of Victoria about a project called VENUS. VENUS is set up in three sites: a location in Saanich Inlet north of Victoria, which went into operation in February of 2006; a location near the Fraser River Delta; and a location in the deeper waters of the Strait of Georgia that will become operational in 2007.



For the VENUS project, the researchers have installed instrument arrays on the seafloor that are cabled to the shore. This will apparently provide long-term oceanographic data on physical, chemical, biological, and sediment conditions. Caucus has been consulted on this project in the past and this presentation was more of an update. It is not thought that this project will affect the commercial prawn fishery. For more information see the VENUS web site at: www.venus.uvic.ca

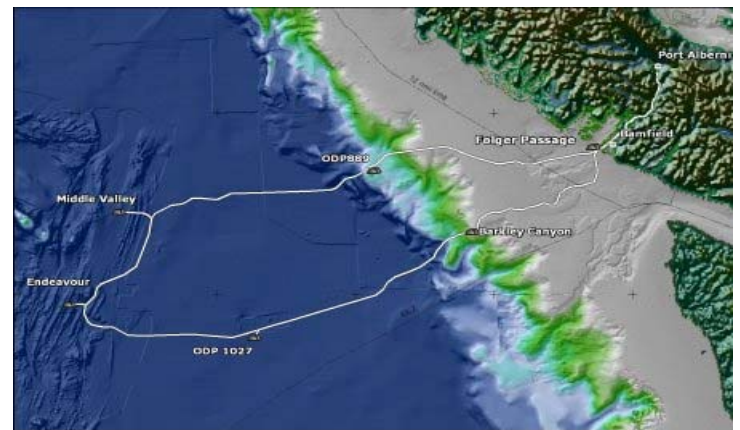
The second presentation was again from the University of Victoria, about a project that is similar to VENUS but much larger. This new project is called NEPTUNE and it is being installed on the west coast of Vancouver Island. NEPTUNE will be the world's largest cable-linked seafloor observatory.

For NEPTUNE, cables are being run down Alberni Canal to Bamfield (on top of or beside the cables that are already in place). From Bamfield an 800 km ring of powered

fibre optic cable will be laid on the seabed over the northern part of the Juan de Fuca tectonic plate (see map below).

The NEPTUNE cable network will initially feature two seafloor “laboratories”, or nodes, one on the northern edge of Barkley Canyon, the other close to the active venting along the Endeavour Ridge. From these nodes, land-based scientists will control and monitor sampling instruments, video cameras and remotely operated vehicles as they collect data from the ocean surface to under the seafloor. Instruments will be interactive—scientists will instruct them to respond to events such as storms, plankton blooms, fish migrations, earthquakes, tsunamis, and underwater volcanic eruptions, as they happen.

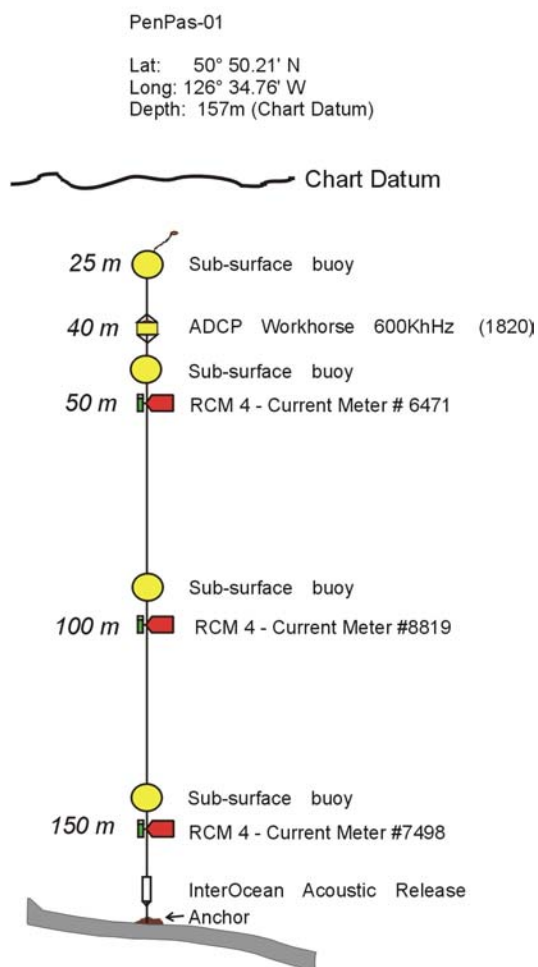
This project is just being started. This was the first time this project had been presented to the Sectoral as part of the consultations. It is not anticipated it will affect the commercial prawn fishery. For more information see the NEPTUNE website at www.neptunecanada.ca



The third presentation was about a DFO initiative through the Institute of Ocean Sciences (IOS). Unfortunately, the DFO-IOS researchers in charge of the project were unable to get to the meeting so Jim Morrison (DFO Lead Prawn Manager) outlined the project for the Sectoral.

It would appear that DFO-IOS deployed two subsurface current meter moorings in Statistical Area 12; one in Penphrase Passage and one in Sutlej Channel in October of this year. These current meter mooring are 25m below the surface, so they shouldn't affect vessel traffic but it is possible that prawn gear set in the area could get snagged depending on the radius of the moorings.

Penphrase Passage Current Meter Mooring



The following chart shows the locations of the two subsurface moorings, the lat/log for Penphrase Passage is show in the previous diagram. The location for the Sutlej Channel mooring is thought to be:

Lat: 50° 52.948' N
Long: 126° 45.076' W



At the Prawn Sectoral Committee meeting the Industry Caucus commented that it would have been preferable if DFO-IOS had consulted with the industry before deploying these moorings.

C) First Nations Treaty Update

DFO advised that federal treaty negotiators had been invited to the Sectoral to provide an update. Due to the weather, the federal negotiators were unable to attend and DFO was not provided with any information to pass on to the Sectoral members.

DFO has been repeatedly requesting federal treaty negotiators provide an update of treaty discussions to the Prawn Sectoral Committee. However, treaty negotiators have declined to attend the meetings. It has been some time since the Prawn Sectoral Committee has been given an update and any news about treaties.

D) WorkSafe (WCB) Update

Pat Olsen, Safety Officer with WorkSafe (formerly WCB), provided an update on the commercial fishing vessel inspection activities WorkSafe is currently conducting.

Pat advised the WorkSafe is focusing on three areas when conducting their inspections; cold water immersion survival, emergency drill requirements and vessel stability. The vessel stability process was outlined as follows:

1. WorkSafe contacts vessel owner and arranges an inspection.
2. WorkSafe conducts the inspection:
 - Meet owner (or owner representative) and vessel master.
 - Review vessel documentation and audit work processes
 - ⇒ information or instruction checklist being used
 - ⇒ downloading prevention
 - ⇒ free surface prevention
 - ⇒ accurate technical data (i.e., stability book)
 - ⇒ good seamanship practices
 - ⇒ requirement for written instructions (for stability in varying loads and conditions)
 - ⇒ review Master's stability knowledge
3. Follow up consultation.
4. Final inspection report issued.
5. Random follow up inspection

According to WorkSafe, to date 35 commercial fishing vessels have been inspected (one was a prawn vessel). Apparently WorkSafe intends to inspect all commercial fishing vessels by 2016. WorkSafe is prioritizing inspection on what they perceive as an "at-risk" basis, and are currently focusing on trawl and trap vessels, multi-licensed vessels, modified vessels and vessels whose "sister ships" have experienced problems.

E) Transportation Safety Board (Marine)

Captain Raymond Matthews of the Transportation Safety Board (TSB) discussed vessel stability and how modifications to a vessel can affect stability. The TSB is responsible for investigating accidents and determining the cause. Captain Matthews used the accidents involving the F/V Fritz-Ann and the F/V Morning Sunrise as examples and noted that the reports of both these incidents are available from TSB website marine section (www.tsb.gc.ca/en/marine/index.asp)

F) DFO Vessel Safety / Vessel Length

DFO prawn managers advised the Sectoral that the Department has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Transport Canada (TC) on Safety at Sea. According to a recent news release, the MOU is to formalize cooperation and to announce a national strategy between TC and DFO (Fisheries Management & Canadian Coast Guard) to establish, maintain and promote a safety culture within the fishing industry. According to DFO the MOU makes specific reference that there will be committee discussions of vessel modifications (bow and stern platforms) and vessel replacement rules. The latter reference includes the topic of vessel length policies.

DFO prawn managers also advised that they intend to start having the management plan reviewed by Coast Guard, Transport Canada, WorkSafe (formerly WCB), and Transportation Safety Board each year before it is finalized. Jim Morrison (DFO Lead Prawn Manager) also advised that DFO is proposing limiting the weight of traps to the current weights of normal double ring traps for the 2007 season. DFO is seeking industry advice on this proposal

and on what should be considered a “normal” weight of a trap when wet.

DFO also noted that they may look at other aspects of the fishery to improve safety in the fishery, noting stacking provision rules, stability testing for vessels, no longer permitting stern extensions, prohibit carrying traps above the wheelhouse, not permitting any modifications that impact on vessel stability and give future consideration to removing vessel length restrictions.

G) Rockfish Bycatch

DFO advised they had not finished their estimates of total rockfish bycatch at the time of the Sectoral meeting. The 2006 rockfish incidence rates had been completed and, overall, they appeared similar to previous years but were higher in statistical areas 10, 16, 17, 27, 28 and 29. This may affect the total rockfish bycatch numbers.

DFO advised the Rockfish Team was still interested in the prawn fishery and would continue to watch the fishery. The Team would like to see a reduction in the amount of rockfish bycatch by the prawn fleet.

Note: Rockfish bycatch continues to be a serious issue for the commercial prawn fleet. Clearly this issue is not going to go away. The Industry Caucus intends to continue its work with Malaspina University to see if there is a trap modification that can reduce rockfish bycatch. The PPFA has helped secure another grant from the federal government to fund some of the work at Malaspina University, thereby reducing the cost to the industry.

H) Fall Spawner Index Surveys

DFO advised that all the data from the fall spawner index surveys has been collected and analyzed. These surveys are done to

control recreational fishing, determining if prawn stocks in the area are weak or strong. DFO noted that nine areas were surveyed this fall and seven will be shut down to recreational fishing until April 1, 2007. Salmon & Sechelt Inlets will remain open as will Howe Sound as prawn stocks in these areas showed sufficient strength.

I) High Use Areas Subcommittee Report

As PPFA members are aware, a subcommittee of the Prawn Sectoral Committee was struck some time ago to look at commercial and recreational fishing in three high use areas (Saanich Inlet, Stuart Channel and Alberni Inlet). An agreement was reached to try a pilot program in Saanich and Stuart starting in 2006. The agreement contained the following points:

- For the 2006 season, changes to the management of the fishery will only apply to Saanich Inlet and Stuart Channel.
- The goal is to increase the March spawner index from 1.7 to 3.4 over a two year period (2006 and 2007), with 50% of the increase occurring each year (Saanich and Stuart only).
- The existing 15% differential between commercial and recreational spawner index will be maintained. In other words, the spawner index will be increased for both sectors.
- DFO to monitor all sectors in these areas (Saanich and Stuart), including commercial, recreational, and First Nations users in 2006.
- The recreational fishery will close in these areas (Saanich and Stuart) at the beginning of the commercial fishery between May 1 and 7 in order to let that

fishery settle in and aid in spawner index sampling.

- The commercial sector will assist in increased spawner index sampling in July and early August in Saanich Inlet and Stuart Channel.
- The recreational sector will move to a “pulse fishery” where these areas (Saanich and Stuart) close for that last two weeks of each month between Labor Day and the following March unless the spawner index is measured below threshold prior to that time.
- The recreational sector to consider implementing a coastwide annual limit for prawns to address high personal use by some individuals in some areas.
- This type of discussion to be continued and expanded to include First Nations groups and may include Alberni Inlet in 2007.

The subcommittee last met on November 14th to review what happened in Saanich & Stuart in 2006, confirm plans for 2007 for these areas and begin discussions on Alberni Inlet. This meeting was more an information session and scoping exercise. For Alberni Inlet, the area in question consists of statistical subareas 23-1, 23-2 and 23-3.

The next meeting of this subcommittee has been scheduled for January 23, 2007. The Industry Caucus has contacted some of the commercial fishermen who work this areas. If you work the Alberni Canal and haven't been contacted, please contact the PPFA office.

J) Future Scientific Licences

DFO advised that because of recent court decisions (i.e., Larocque case), the

Department will no longer be able to conduct the post season testing program as it has in the past. The Department is no longer able to use fish to pay for DFO activities. DFO put forward three possible options for consideration as ways to conduct testing in the future:

1. fish, but release all prawns (wasn't made clear how this would help deal with funding surveys).
2. conduct the testing as part of First Nations food, social and ceremonial fisheries for prawns.
3. somehow make the testing an option in the commercial fishery (e.g., some vessels forgoe the last week of the season and fish later allowing the surveys to be conducted; it was not clear how this would actually work).

The Industry Caucus had discussed this matter prior to the Prawn Sectoral Committee meeting. The Caucus reps felt that it was important for the industry to stay firmly involved and in control of the testing. Caucus also felt that instead of a short-term, band-aid fix to this problem a long-term solution needed to be developed.

As a result, Caucus recommended to DFO that the industry will continue to supply vessels, gear and crews to conduct the testing over the next year, working with DFO to conduct the testing in as cost-effective manner as possible. This would leave time to develop a long term strategy to address surveying prawn stocks to ensure they are not overfished by the recreational sector.

K) Medium Size Prawn Assessment

Mike Kattilakoski (DFO Prawn Technician) made a presentation of the results from work he has undertaken looking at the amount of medium prawns in the overall catch. Mike

was also looking at the potential impacts on overall catch if the minimum size was increased from 33mm to 34mm.

Based on logbook data and samples from landings, Mike noted the number of mediums represents between 24-28% of the total catch. Based on the information collected, Mike commented that increasing the minimum size limit would mean that more sorting would be required.

One possible solution noted would be to increase mesh size; this would mean less sorting on the vessel, would reduce handling mortalities of undersize prawns. However, it was also acknowledged that it is unknown what the catch composition would be from using larger mesh traps and changing mesh size would represent a cost to industry.

There were a number of comments from the Sectoral representatives and observers present with regard to medium prawns. It was noted that product from Argentina and Russia is currently competing directly against BC medium prawns in the Japanese market.

However, it was also noted that just a few years ago the Japanese market seemed to want medium prawns. Some buyers commented that the Japanese market has slowed as frozen inventories have increased and the thinking is that prices may be lower in 2007 because of this increased volume.

DFO noted two options that could reduce the number of mediums in the catch: 1) increase mesh size; and, 2) delay the opening of the season until the third week in May. However, DFO advised this was an industry issue and would wait for direction from the Industry Caucus on whether any measures should be taken to reduce the number of mediums caught..

L) 2006 Offshore Fishery Review

Jim Morrison (DFO Lead Prawn Manager) noted that logbooks had yet to be received from two of the four vessels that participated in the 2006 offshore fishery. As a result, confidentiality restrictions applied and limited what data DFO could present.

Jim noted that the 2006 offshore fishery substantially increased DFO's workload for the year. In particular, the data management and analysis associated with the electronic monitoring (EM) systems from the vessels created significant work for DFO. Jim noted that the EM systems were put in place for enforcement purposes, to monitor vessels fishing activities as well as time and area fished. Jim expressed concern that much of the EM data was in a format that could not be easily used by enforcement personnel.

As a result, Jim Morrison recommended that an offshore fishery not be conducted in 2007, but noted that this was his own opinion and it had not been discussed with the other prawn managers. Jim advised that if the industry wanted to continue the offshore fishery in 2007, they should let DFO know and start speaking with the Department about how it could be done.

M) 2007 Management Plan

DFO advised that they intend to distribute a draft of the 2007 management plan to the Prawn Sectoral Committee in late January. DFO advised that they want comments back before the end of February so they can finalize the plan and send it to be approved.

N) Next Meeting

The next Prawn Sectoral Committee meeting is expected to take place in early April, 2007 in Nanaimo.

Vessel Safety

As PPFA members can see, vessel safety and vessel stability continues to be an issue for the commercial prawn fishery. Three separate agenda items at the last Prawn Sectoral Committee meeting focussed on vessel safety/vessel stability topics.

The PPFA encourages all prawn fishermen to take the steps necessary to make their fishing vessels as safe as possible and always consider safety when conducting fishing operations.

If you have any questions about vessel safety and regulatory requirements, contact Gina Johansen, Fishing Industry Safety Coordinator. Gina is an employee of the fishing industry not WCB or Transport Canada; she works for the fishing industry.

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With respect to vessel stability, the PPFA encourages all prawn fishermen to take the vessel stability course being offered through the FishSafe program. This course has been designed by fishermen for fishermen and is taught by fishermen. It is an excellent way to learn about vessel stability, the regulations in place and your responsibilities as a vessel master/owner. Courses are being offered in the following locations:

Richmond
January 9-12
February 6-9
February 13-16
March 6-9

Prince Rupert
December 12-15
January 23-26

Nanaimo

Jan 30 – Feb 2

For those members living in other areas of the coast (e.g., Powell River or Sunshine Coast) FishSafe is willing to arrange alternate dates/locations for groups of 8-10.

Industry Caucus Meetings

The next Industry Caucus meeting has been scheduled for January 11, 2007 in Nanaimo.

PPFA Distribution List

The PPFA has started a distribution list as a way to disseminate information to members. The distribution list will use email or fax.

If you would like to get on the distribution list, please do the following:

- To get on the email list, please send an email to the PPFA office (ppfa@telus.net) providing your name, vessel name, address, postal code, phone, fax, cell and email address. Please put "PPFA Distribution List" in the subject box so we don't accidentally delete the email thinking it is spam (we worry about catching a computer virus). We will use this information to confirm your membership and ensure our records are up to date. We will add you to the distribution list.
- If you are on the email list you will receive updates, notices and newsletters by email. The emails will be in plain text format and will use PDF files for attachments when necessary.
- To get on the fax list, please send a fax to the PPFA office (604-648-8737) providing your name, vessel name,

address, postal code, phone, fax and cell. We will use this information to confirm your membership and ensure our records are up to date. We will add you to the distribution list. We will only fax smaller documents; larger documents will continue to be mailed as part of the newsletter.

Please note that we will be using an internet fax to send these notices. We cannot call you first. Because it will be a fax to more than one person, we cannot include a cover sheet. You must have a separate fax number or your fax machine must automatically pick up. If there are ongoing problems connecting to your fax machine we will have to remove you from this distribution list. If you have any questions about this, please contact the PPFA office.

The PPFA will continue to send regular newsletters to its members by mail. If you have any ideas for future newsletters or topics of interest, please contact the PPFA office.

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