



PUHA NEWSLETTER

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President's Report—mike featherstone



The 2005/2006 season, although not officially over, is basically finished. This year we left behind over 2 million pounds coast wide and had 11 licences not validate. This is mainly due to market and ex-vessel price although weather hindered production at key times to compound matters. Unfortunately, it doesn't look promising going forward. The same factors, particularly the Russian IUU fishery, continue to have a major impact on the market.

The Japanese market views the Canadian price as too high, this being a combination of the higher Canadian dollar and the large supply of cheap product from Russia and Chile. Nevertheless, fishermen who found quality and recoveries at key times were satisfied with their prices but that was the exception and the industry as a whole is certainly at a low point.

On the financial side PUHA, is managing by deferring some commitments and cutting back on others. This strategy can fill in the holes for short time but will not work in the long term. We have had some discussions regarding alternative methods of funding such as taking part of the resource to off set fees. The idea sounds fine but when you think deeper it may not provide an option as it is simply moving the funding bases not really generating more or alternative revenues.

On the political front PUHA continues to work with the Federal Government to advocate for controls on the Russian IUU fishery and for the Japanese Government to restrict imports of illegal product. I have also written letters and had discussions with government officials at all levels detailing our predicament vis-à-vis budget shortfalls and Joint Project Agreement commitments.

The Quota planning meeting was held in the past few weeks and the group prepared recommendations for next year's management plan. There are few major changes, mostly just fine tuning and more use of TBA areas which can be accessed for fishing all season. Tofino is the only area which will see major quota reductions all due to the arrival of sea otters into the area. This winter and spring the otters have devastated the experimental study area and most of the fishing grounds have been impacted. The areas set aside for Native use have also been impacted and the Ahousat representatives have raised the alarm bells regarding these impacts. Sea otters are the greatest threat to the sustainability of our fishery.

The spring semi-annual general meeting will be held at Beban Park, June 21, 2006 starting at 9:30 am. The south coast lottery for 2006-07 will be held at lunch time, contact DFO or PUHA for your designation request. Hope to see you all there! Come on share your thoughts on where we go from here and get in on the action of the south coast licence lottery.

Survey Up-date



The QCC Island Experimental Area will be surveyed commencing the end of July for 8-10 days. Survey vessel needs to be approved by DFO and provide 2 divers.

One industry diver is needed for the Tofino survey starting June 20th. Diver needs to supply personal dive gear and have current WCB medical and certification. Accommodation provided by DFO.

There is one survey planned for the south coast (eastern central portion). 8-10 days PUHA requires dive vessel and crew, date still to be confirmed.

If you are interested in any of these surveys or require more information please contact Dan Leus at 1-250-756-7147 or Ross Morris at the PUHA office 1-604-524-0322

Constitution, Management Fees

One of the surprise events at the quota planning meeting was a few members waving the constitution claiming that since the divers indirectly or directly pay the Validation/PUHA management fees that they are the PUHA members and not the licence holders and therefore should have the voting rights at the meeting. The logic then goes on that these persons can then vote on their pet issues and PUHA will act according to their wishes.

In my view PUHA has always been a licence holder organization and the licence holders hold the voting rights. DFO only deals directly with licence holders and PUHA is the representative body of the licence holders. Of course divers, tenders and operators are an important part of our association and PUHA has always encouraged everyone's input and participation. I am sure this issue will be raised at the June 21 meeting so I encourage all licence holders to provide their position to myself (604-230-1686) or Ross Morris at the PUHA office (604-5240-322). If you have strong opinions on this matter and can't make the meeting ensure you provide a proxy to a representative who will be attending the meeting.

Another interesting aside to the issue of how licence fees and management fees are paid relates to our friends at Revenue Canada. In the recent past, in another quota fishery, one of the licence holders was ruled to have a less favourable tax position as they weren't paying the fees directly. The jest of the ruling was that if you don't pay the fees directly you are simply an investor (like a stock) and therefore have to pay under the same rules as an investor. This means no write-offs and higher tax rate. I am not a tax expert, but, if this relates to how you, as licence holder manage your affairs, I recommend speaking with an expert to avoid any surprises in the future.

South Coast Lottery

Area Licence numbers for the 2006/2007 Red Sea Urchin fishery year are:

South Coast: 17 licences

North Coast: 93 licences

Pursuant to the Red Sea Urchin Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will determine area designation through a process of voluntary placement and lottery out of the over-subscribed area. All Red Sea Urchins Licence Eligibility Holders must participate and Area Selection Forms will be mailed out shortly.

There are 110 valid licence eligibilities of which the Communal Commercial licences and the South Coast Area Coordinator will be excluded from the Area Selection/Lottery process.

The Area Selection/Lottery will occur at the Pacific Urchin Harvesters Association Annual General Meeting in mid June 2006. A DFO representative will be in attendance to conduct the draw. Licence holders are asked to bring their completed area selection forms to the meeting. If a Licence Holder cannot attend the meeting, the area selection form may be submitted by a designated representative for the licence.

Any licence holders who do not participate in this process will have the area last fished in 2005/2006 elected and a ballot will be submitted for this area on their behalf.

A lottery will be held using the area selection forms submitted. This lottery will comprise a draw to ascertain who will be compelled to move out of the over-subscribed area to the under-subscribed area. For example, if the South Coast Area is over-subscribed, only those area selection forms selecting "South Coast" will be used in the lottery process.

The final area selection/lottery results will be made available as soon after the draw as possible. Licensing for the 2006/2007 fishery year will begin at that time.

For further information, contact the Pacific Fishery Licence Unit nearest you:

Nanaimo: (250) 754-0400

Prince Rupert: (250) 627-3413

Vancouver: (604) 666-0566



Dive Safe International—Kelly Korol

Kelly Korol, who teaches commercial diving programs at North Island College in Campbell River, has formed Dive Safe Int. to take training to students home towns—mobile training facility. They will be teaching a W.C.B. Occupational Diver course in Vancouver from August 8th to September 8th (5 weeks). For information on their courses, reference www.commercialsuba.com or call 250-923-3838 or email korol@telus.net

Website

The P.U.H.A. website is designed for the PUHA members to use for sharing information, learning new ideas and a general resource for the Urchin Fisheries in BC. Look at puha.org for P.U.H.A. Newsletter and Publications, Networking Opportunities, make new professional contacts, Interact with your peers, Members Directory Information, Grants/Travelships, Online Job Listings, Money Saving Opportunities. You can post free classified ads for employment, selling items, looking for items etc.

We encourage the members to share their personal stories and ideas for the website so that we can make it grow to be what you want to see. All ideas are considered for merit and can be used for content on the website. Please email Ross at puha@telus.net with any ideas or suggestions for site content and layout.

D. & D. Pacific Fisheries

The 2nd of May was the last day of fishing for urchins in the north coast. The fishing fleet struggled in the central coast over weather, and gave up in the Calamity Bay area. One group headed south to fish Milbanke area but quit shortly after, and a few vessels fished Tree Nob for a few days and then also ceased fishing activities.

The vessels worked without an On-grounds monitor on clean-up, and with minor problems, the program worked well in all respects.

The north coast completed 72% of the quotas this season (88% last season). It was again predicted by buyers in January that only 55% to 65% of the TAC was to be taken this season, so it looks like the fleet did well considering the poor market for Canadian product.

The south coast, completed 92% of its quota areas (97% last season). Bamfield and Ucluelet are the two areas that have the most difficulty in completing due to quality, but Buckle Group, Stuart Island, and Bates all had quota remaining. It will be interesting for PUHA to keep an eye on these areas to find “when” these areas are best to harvest. Sidney Inlet has been achieved in previous seasons, but had been dropped for this past season due to lack of urchins due to sea otters. Bates Passage and Shadwell both had reports of sea otters. Bamfield has always been the quota area hard to complete. Overall, 79% of the TAC was achieved coast wide.

D&D wants to emphasize that all harvest charts need to be delivered to our head office within 28 days after the fishing dates. Failure to submit the charts on time or even worse, after the season closes will cost you. DFO is now charging for late submissions of harvest data after the season closes. When asked why the charge of money for the late digitization of data, the response was that DFO can either charge the person in court for the failure of the 28 day requirement and charge a fee for late digitization of data, or post reminders to fishers about the data delivery timeline, and have the fisher learn that poor chart delivery will cost you.

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Marketing—goeff krause

PUHA and the West Coast Green Urchin Association have again received funding approval for the next two years from the Canada Agri Food International (CAFI) program. The CAFI program provides matching dollar funding to continue with the marketing initiative that has been underway for the past 3 years. This funding has allowed the Urchin Groups from Canada to send delegations to the Brussels Seafood Show and to Japan to build relationships with our buyers for each of the past few years and supported the redevelopment of PUHA's website over this past year. The same sort of activities are planned for the coming year.

The market in Japan has been fairly rocky for the past couple of years, in no small measure because of the Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Russian fishery in the Kurile Islands. This situation does not appear much closer to resolution, so the tough market is likely to continue. However, our visits have revealed some interest in Japan for joint marketing efforts to sell Canadian product. This sort of interest will be key to establishing a premium product from Canada, particularly if it is supported by increasingly detailed documentation on the source and handling characteristics for the product.

Japanese consumers are renowned for their willingness to pay high prices for luxury goods but talking the talk will not ensure higher prices. Walking the walk to consistently deliver what is promised is also key and for that, we have to all work together- PUHA executive, fishermen, processors and buyers. Please read a few of the marketing and logistics reports on the website (www.puha.org) and bring your ideas, questions, comments and insights to the upcoming meetings this summer.

D. & D. Pacific Fisheries—continued

D&D has noticed that there are the same persons late with data every year and in every fishery they participate in. DFO is now planning to get tough with these individuals.

The middle of May, PUHA held a "quota planning meeting" in efforts to work out the logistical problems with the fishing schedule. This process is very important, and requires as much input as possible from the fleet to hopefully eliminate most conflicts on the grounds that would benefit everyone, not just a few.

In addition to the quota planning, DFO science wanted D&D to capture all red sea urchin habitat coast wide on charts from fishers at the meeting. This was to be a very important process for PSARC, but attendance was low and other business kept the group from concentrating on quota planning let alone the habitat work.

The lottery will take place this month for the south coast draw of licences at the PUHA general meeting June 21st, 2006).

As a reminder, you can visit our website www.d-dpacificfisheries.com to get up to date in respects to harvest and landing info by quota areas. If you have any pictures or comments you would like to post on our site, please let us know.

