



ABORIGINAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION of Canada

March 2011

Respecting community, culture and values...



EXPERTS AROUND THE TABLE

Local expertise and know-how linked-up with the perspective of the AAA at the series of workshops held across Vancouver Island this spring.

The information-exchange events were held in Campbell River, Port Alberni and Nanaimo.

Aquaculture and fisheries experts from many First Nation communities as well as the industry got together at the workshops that were hosted by the AAA.

Facilitating the discussions were AAA presenters Don Sinclair and Odd Grydeland who covered a variety of topics including:

- Aquaculture license application process;
- Development opportunities;
- Potential funding sources;
- The Pacific North Coast management area; and
- Geoduck policy for wild and aquaculture.

“Very knowledgeable participants from throughout the industry were what made the workshops worthwhile,” AAA president Richard Harry said.

“Sharing on-the-ground information between

communities is certainly one of the main things that the AAA is all about. We can provide support and direction, but local experience and knowledge is always going to be valuable as our communities move forward into developing sustainable aquaculture industries.”

The workshops included discussion about Canada’s aquaculture strategic action plan initiative – NASAPI.

Please see the [NASAPI factsheet](#) on the last page of this newsletter

This is ‘an opportunity’

During the discussion that accompanied the presentation, Richard Harry said that while the national initiative is a challenge, “The AAA and First Nations can use NASAPI as an aquaculture opportunity. We have been fighting for this kind of thing for the past 20-25 years.

“NASAPI allows us to have a hand in changing policies,” he said.

Don Sinclair agreed and said: “Why not be involved and have a hand in regulations for our benefit rather than waiting around for someone else to do it?”

“The NASAPI process identified promising species that are ready for commercialization,” he said, and all are already being cultured in BC. They include:

Finfish – Sablefish (Black cod) and Rockfish; and

Shellfish – Geoduck, Mussels and Scallops.

A number of other species are currently under study and could open future opportunities for Aboriginal aquaculture. They include:

Finfish – Hagfish (Slime eel), Sturgeon, Tilapia and Wolf eel;

Shellfish – Abalone, Cockles and Sea Urchins; and

Other – Sea Cucumber, Seaweed (Kelp), Marine Algae, and Crayfish.

There was also discussion about things such as the research into growing marine algae for ‘bio-mass’ energy.

New aquaculture ventures are growing along BC’s south coast including harvesting caviar from sturgeon near Sechelt and a shellfish operation in Clayoquot Sound that grows multiple species on a single site.

Licenses and tenures

The new regime for aquaculture licenses and tenures in BC was also on the agenda.

A Crown Land Tenure is still required from the BC government, unless private land is being used. This allows a specific site to be used for aquaculture purposes.



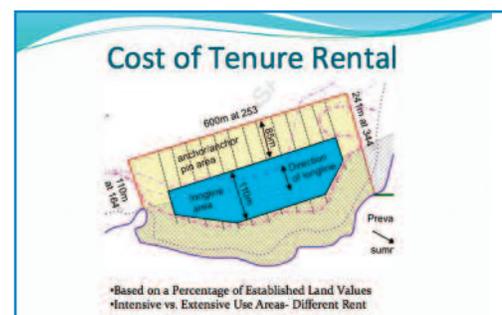
Richard Harry talks about aquaculture with David Schmidt of Quatsino First Nation.



Andy Olson (centre,) of Tseshaht First Nation talks with AAA presenters Don Sinclair (left) and Odd Grydeland during a break.

But any aquaculture activity (other than plant production) now needs an Aquaculture License from the DFO. These licenses were previously issued by the province. This license describes how a user will produce finfish or shellfish and it will also specify certain conditions.

The three different types of tenure were outlined. They include: investigative permit, license of occupation and a foreshore lease the latter giving exclusive use for up to 30 years, in the case of shellfish aquaculture.



A slide from the information-rich workshop

Discussion also centered on the costs associated with the different types of tenure from the provincial government.

As for the new licenses from DFO, the department is accepting applications and will deal with each one on an individual basis. Conditions for both fresh and saltwater finfish and shellfish licenses were outlined.

DFO policies under scrutiny

There was much discussion at the workshop about DFO policies past and present over both salmon and geoduck.

“DFO is slow to shift policies,” said Stefan Ochman of Huu-aaht Nation. “They are focussed on a production plan and it takes years to change.”

But Carol Schmitt, who operates the Omega Pacific Hatchery with Bruce Kenny, said there was hope for salmon.

She spoke in detail about her company’s development of a “pathogen free” Chinook juveniles.

The Omega hatchery rears the fish for an extra year in cold water, similar to what happens naturally.

Omega says that its pathogen-free fish could be the answer for threatened Chinook stocks on Vancouver Island’s west coast.

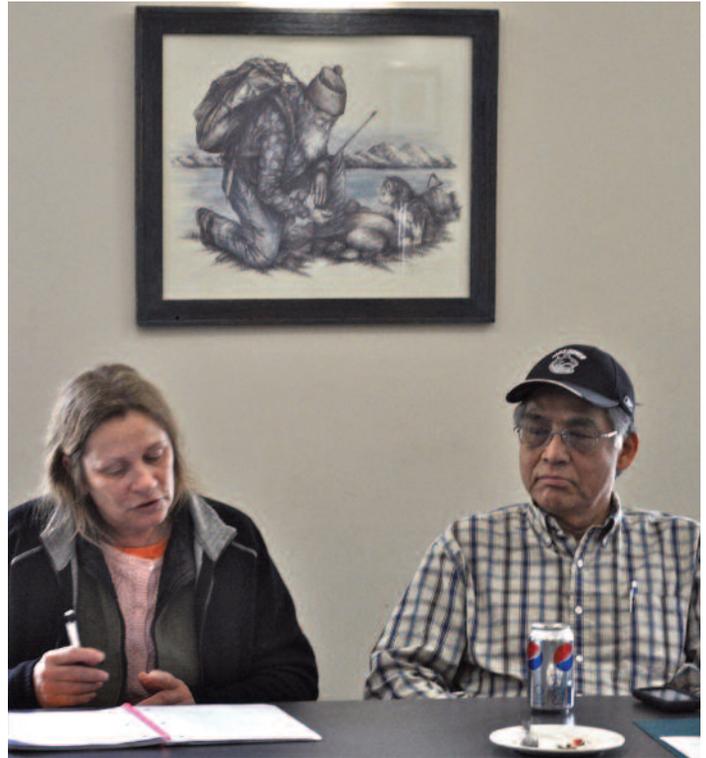
“This has huge repercussions,” Carol said. “I think we will be able to get a 10 per cent survival rate.

If in doubt, you just have to look to what Mother Nature is doing. Almost all the wild stocks of Chinook are extinct. We have to do preventative management and good husbandry. Carol Schmitt

DFO policy over the geoduck harvest was also criticized. First Nations want to be involved in the wild and farmed geoduck industry. Although some are already in the business, others have been frustrated by the lack of progress.

NASAPI lays the groundwork for an expanded geoduck aquaculture industry in B.C.

“It is up to us to help create a new policy and a new licensing regime for geoduck aquaculture,” Richard Harry said. “Only as a collective can we really advance First Nations’ positions.”



Some of those attending the Port Alberni meeting included Carol Schmitt of Omega Pacific and Wally Samuel of Ahousaht Nation (above); Ted Assu (below left) from the We Wai Kai Seafood Corp. and the Stefan Ochman of Huu-aaht Nation. whose friends call the ‘Mayor of Bamfield’



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To promote and assist the development of First Nations’ aquaculture that respects and supports First Nation communities, culture and values.



Just what is NASAPI and why is it important?

The AAA coordinated meetings for DFO where the draft NASAPI were presented and discussed. The AAA compiled a consolidated list of comments and recommendations from the meetings. Two summary reports were prepared.

We provided an initial report in late 2009 and another in September 2010. The latter report focussing on proposed action plans for West Coast shellfish and finfish.

Five principles

Five basic principles have guided the AAA's reports and responses:

- 1 – Respect for First Nation's autonomy;
- 2 – Enhance economic development opportunities for each First Nation;
- 3 – Implement shared decision-making and co-operative management of resources between each First Nation and government;
- 4 – Ensure that First Nations realize the benefits from a sustainable aquaculture industry; and
- 5 – Promote both socio-economic and environmental sustainability.

The 2009 Report

The document was prepared with two purposes in mind:

1. To ensure that DFO understands and acknowledges the existence of First Nations' aboriginal rights including title and treaty rights as they pertain to the marine resources when implementing these new aquaculture regulations; and

2. To advance the interests of the coastal First Nations related to developing:

(a) Existing and alternative species (e.g. geoduck) for aquaculture and enhancement;

- (b) salmonid enhancement;
- (c) the potential for ocean ranching;
- (d) First Nations roles in regulation and enforcement, and
- (e) certification through the AAA Sustainability Principles and Audit Standard for Aquaculture Operations.

The report concluded with these words:

"The AAA and other First Nations realize that the focus of this discussion is on the future of aquaculture. However, many First Nations perceive this attention as abandoning the wild fishery, especially wild salmon.

As noted earlier, they view aquaculture as all inclusive, including wild stock restoration and enhancement in addition to intensive farm culture.

Community benefits

First Nations believe that a fully comprehensive aquaculture program can be truly sustainable and will contribute important socio-economic benefits to coastal First Nation communities in the following way:

- Increased employment, in isolated communities
- New training opportunities,
- Joint venture business opportunities,
- Project management opportunities
- License ownership,
- Accommodation,
- Research and development partnerships

First Nations no longer wish to be on the outside looking in.

We are interested in direct participation in the development of sustainable aquaculture to alleviate poverty and to help achieve new wealth and future prosperity for their communities.

The 2010 Report

The September 2010 report was titled: "A Coastal First Nations review of the Strategic Action Plan for West Coast Finfish & Shellfish Aquaculture".

This report said that many of the concerns about action items in the first draft of NASAPI a year earlier were now supported.

But there were still concerns about the lack of consultation during the development of regulations.

And the report said that policies and principles for ecosystem-based management and other areas "can all be very confusing and in some cases are viewed as a serious obstruction to more traditional salmon enhancement efforts".

There was a call for support, in year one of NASAPI, for dialogue between the AAA and First Nations.

When it comes to Aboriginal Engagement in Aquaculture section of NASAPI, the report called for clearer understanding with the BC government in order to resolve problems that have occurred with regional districts.

There was also strong support for training of aboriginal fisheries officers to enforce aquaculture activities within traditional territories.

Need for Action Plan

The report ended with the words:

"There is still an overall concern for the lack of aboriginal content and consultation and the lack of First Nation participation in aquaculture. There is urgent need for an additional First Nation Action Plan... to ensure interested First Nations will acquire the necessary knowledge for developing their respective aquaculture interests."