

## Nanaimo Public Forum Summaries

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Date: September 14, 2010  
Time: 1:35 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. (approximately)  
Venue: Vancouver Island Convention Centre (Benson B Room)  
Presentations: 3

### Welcome

Jeff Thomas welcomed the commission to the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. He explained that he grew up in the Nanaimo fishing industry, but was forced to find new employment 12 years ago due to declining salmon returns. Mr. Thomas recalled the size of the commercial fishing fleet in the 1950s, noting that his reserve alone had 300 fishing boats. He emphasized that fishing remains a way of life for his people, and that they wish to continue that way of life into the future. He encouraged the Commissioner to listen carefully to the afternoon's presentations, and expressed hope that the commission's work would lead to the rebuilding of Fraser sockeye stocks.

### Dr. David Welch (President, Kintama Research Corporation)

Dr. David Welch said that climate change is a major issue affecting sockeye. He explained that while science cannot determine the precise impact of warming waters, it is clear that overall, sockeye survival will worsen as water temperatures rise. Dr. Welch also pointed to DFO's fisheries management as an important factor, one which he said involves a complex trade-off between preserving salmon and the needs of the aquaculture and forestry industries. He said that it is crucial for scientists studying the decline of Fraser sockeye to pinpoint where problems are occurring in order to prevent wasted effort, noting that the effect of marine climate change is one subject on which further, coordinated research would be beneficial. Dr. Welch warned the commissioner that the personal judgements of fisheries scientists can be misleading if not based on data. He explained that his company is attempting to develop technologies to improve the collection and measurement of fisheries data, and he encouraged the Commissioner to address the gaps in scientific knowledge about what may have caused the decline of Fraser sockeye.

### Darrell Campbell (Fisheries Manager, Ahousaht First Nation)

Darrell Campbell responded to three of the questions posed by the commission: 'What is your vision for the sustainability of Fraser sockeye?', 'What is required to secure the future of Fraser sockeye?', and 'What are the major habitat issues for Fraser sockeye and how can these be mitigated?' On the first two questions, Mr. Campbell called on the Commissioner to carefully consider legal precedent around First Nations rights, particularly *R. V. Sparrow*. He said that DFO continues to increase allocations for sport fishers, many of whom he argued are neither British Columbian nor Canadian, at the expense of First Nations, including the Ahousaht. He described the need for DFO to reverse its harvesting priority to ensure First Nations and British Columbians can sustain a commercial fishery. Mr. Campbell also said that the social impact of Fraser sockeye must be considered, and that the Commissioner should recommend the implementation of a regional management scheme. He recalled the words of an

Ahousaht elder, who advised him to be thrifty and not greedy. On the third question, Mr. Campbell said that the Ahousaht First Nation carefully monitors the fish farms operating on its territory. He emphasized that fish farming provides an economic benefit for the Ahousaht community, but that the protocol permitting its operation would be rescinded should the Ahousaht find that it is harmful to the environment.

**Dan Edwards** (Executive Director, Area "A" Crab Association)

Dan Edwards argued that the major problem facing the Canadian fishery is political and bureaucratic interference and mismanagement. He described his personal and political experience as a commercial fisher, noting that he trolled for salmon for 40 years. He said that DFO enacted a 'two river' policy to deliberately destroy the small boat commercial fishing fleet, which he said exacerbated the economic effects of the 1999 collapse of the Fraser River fishery. Mr. Edwards described unsuccessful attempts by coastal communities to lobby the federal and provincial governments to enact natural disaster legislation following the 1999 season. He explained to the Commissioner that he launched a hunger strike that ended when DFO agreed to a review of its consultation processes, the results of which Mr. Edwards said were ignored or manipulated. He pointed to this experience as an example of what he called the continuing refusal by DFO to develop comprehensive planning that respects the ability of all users to fairly access fish resources.

Mr. Edwards called on the Commissioner to visit the west coast of Vancouver Island to observe how DFO's refusal to permit local fishers to harvest the 2010 return caused significant economic loss. He suggested that DFO's desire to destroy the economic viability of the commercial fishery is due to pressures from sport fishing and First Nation interests, environmental groups, the Alaskan commercial fishery, and the aquaculture industry. He concluded by calling on the Commissioner to recommend the implementation of an ecosystem-based integrated management scheme based on sound science and principle-driven allocation processes.