

New Westminster Public Forum Summaries

Date: September 20, 2010
Time: 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. (approximately)
Venue: Inn at the Quay
Presentations: 20

Bob Rezanoff

Bob Rezanoff introduced himself as the president of the Fishing Vessel Owners Association of British Columbia and a director of the Commercial Salmon Advisory Board, among other positions, and he outlined his long involvement in the fishing industry. He said that there is currently too much focus on conservation and that any discussion of the sustainability of Fraser sockeye should include consideration of the sustainability of the fishing industry. He feels that protecting weak stocks through escapement targets has a detrimental effect on stronger stocks and on the industry. Mr. Rezanoff pointed out that there are currently substantial unreported fisheries which impede fisheries management, a situation he attributed to political expediency. He stressed the importance of protecting salmon habitat and advocated the use of an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system for all salmon fisheries. He provided a list of specific recommendations and closed by stating his opinion that much academic research and public opinion on fisheries has been shaped by the influence of wealthy charitable foundations.

Don Staniford

Don Staniford introduced himself as being with Wild Salmon First and said he has been involved in salmon farming issues. He stressed that wild salmon must come first over farmed salmon. He noted that much of the salmon farming is run by Norwegian corporations and said that wild salmon can support a coastal economy in British Columbia. He described how wild salmon migratory routes run past salmon farms. He encouraged the Commissioner to demand open and fully transparent disease information from salmon farmers in order to address the causes of the 2009 sockeye collapse. He also demanded that supermarkets refuse to sell farmed salmon and that salmon farms adopt closed-containment facilities to stop the spread of waste and disease. He advocated that salmon in British Columbia should not take a back seat to other industries such as gravel mining, oil and farming.

Rick Glumac

Rick Glumac introduced himself as a founding member of a group called the Wild Salmon Circle and described his personal connection to the salmon. He encouraged all members of the Cohen Commission to be mindful of the recommendations of previous reports which he said have been predominately ignored. In particular, he highlighted a past recommendation to rigorously apply the precautionary principle with respect to regulation of salmon farming. He stated his belief that it is necessary to transition to closed-containment aquaculture in order to protect wild salmon. Finally, he cautioned against misusing this year's strong sockeye return as an opportunity to discount the risk that salmon

farms pose to wild salmon, stating that high numbers of sea lice found in sockeye smelt in 2009 could mean that another sockeye collapse is due in 2011.

Celia Brauer

Celia Brauer described herself as a co-founder of the False Creek Watershed Society. She mentioned a number of factors which she believes led to the collapse of the 2009 sockeye return, including gravel removal from the Fraser River, pollution from urban runoff, destruction of salmon streams by development projects, inadequate sewage treatment by the Iona Sewage Plant, open-net salmon farming, and prioritization of fishing jobs and economic considerations over conservation concerns. She said that more science is not needed to protect the salmon, and instead society needs to develop a closer connection to the natural world.

Michael Barkusky

Michael Barkusky described his background in accounting and economics. He said that the traditional separation between economics and science is a mistake, and that salmon should be viewed as a capital asset which must be maintained in good functioning order. He described the tendency in mainstream economics to assume that money is a good substitute for everything and cautioned that this approach is dangerous with natural capital assets. Mr. Barkusky noted the importance of salmon to the overall ecosystem and said that it makes economic sense to maintain salmon habitat. He acknowledged the tension between economic, ecological and social equity pressures but cautioned that because salmon is the fixed constraint in the system, it is the other pressures which must give way in order to guarantee the continued viability of sockeye salmon. He said that application of the precautionary principle is the fundamental cornerstone for management of salmon habitat and the salmon fishery.

Lorne Jones

Lorne Jones identified himself as an actor, author and playwright. He compared the plight of Fraser sockeye to that of other threatened animals. He said that protection of some of these other animals has been bolstered by great public support due to the public visibility or perceived 'cuddly quotient' of these animals. He argued that greater public visibility of the salmon themselves would lead to greater demands for increased protection. To achieve this end, he advocated the development of a new sport of 'fish-watching', by means of underwater cameras attached to fishing lines.

Darrel McEachern

Darrel McEachern introduced himself as a fisherman with over 50 years experience and a member of various fishers associations. He spoke in favour of an ITQ system in managing the salmon fishery. He mentioned a number of studies which have advocated the use of such a system and said that fisheries using ITQ systems are generally sustainable and economically viable. He outlined a number of advantages of ITQ systems including increased accuracy of catch numbers, increased efficiency and improved cooperation and safety. He noted that ITQ systems have been introduced in some sectors of the salmon fishery and advocated their use coast-wide for all salmon fisheries.

Victor Guerin

Victor Guerin introduced himself as a member of the Musqueam First Nation. He spoke of the stewardship his ancestors exercised over the creatures of the Lower Mainland. He said that it is a misguided strategy to attempt to manage salmon stocks in the ocean while doing next to nothing to protect the streams and creeks in which salmon spawn. He said that the Fraser River estuary is now almost devoid of salt marsh areas which are critical for salmonid populations as they acclimatize themselves to the marine environment. He pointed out that the developers of the South Fraser Perimeter Road spoke in favour of a 'no net loss' policy on habitat, a policy which he criticized as conceivably allowing the destruction of natural salmon streams if man-made habitat was created somewhere else. He said that while there were once 50 salmon streams in Vancouver alone, the entire BC coast now relies on perhaps six strong salmon runs. He stressed the crucial importance of habitat protection and restoration in saving Fraser River sockeye and salmon in general.

Rob Dainow

Rob Dainow said that he has read a number of salmon reports, the most recent being the report of the Pacific Salmon Commission from the June 2010 sockeye salmon workshop in Nanaimo. He was impressed with the range of experts at that workshop and the range of hypotheses which were presented. He discussed factors which he believes are having an impact on sockeye salmon, including habitat reduction, run-of-river power projects, and marine survivability. He stated that aquaculture is the biggest controllable threat to salmon and that there is an unconscionable lack of transparency in that industry. To preserve the salmon, he said that harvest management should always err on the side of conservation and that citizens should stay engaged with the issues. He closed by saying that one thing everyone could do to preserve wild salmon would be to quit eating farmed salmon.

Mike Forrest

Mike Forrest described himself as a third-generation fisher on the Fraser River. He said that for the fishery to be sustainable, there needs to be one integrated commercial fishery on the Fraser, with one set of conservation rules and escapement goals, and that too often good science is overridden by political considerations. He noted that over-escapement wastes the salmon resource and mentioned a number of habitat issues affecting salmon. He criticized DFO as trying to keep Fraser fisheries closed rather than trying to deliver open fisheries. He believes the sockeye fishery should be managed using a fleet-wide Total Allowable Catch (TAC) rather than an ITQ system. He said that there must be timely and accurate catch accounting in all fishery sectors, and that Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) First Nations fisheries should be especially scrutinized in times of low returns. Finally, he encouraged citizens to stay well-informed and to concentrate on what is good for the fish, not on what is perceived to be politically correct.

Terry Slack

Terry Slack said that his family has fished the North Arm of the Fraser for over 70 years. He spoke in support of the earlier comments of Victor Guerin and outlined a number of threats to salmon habitat. He pointed in particular to the Annacis Island sewage treatment plant as a source of effluent harmful to

sockeye salmon. He concluded by saying that less than five per cent of salmon smolt habitat remains in the North Arm and that restoration efforts have been largely unsuccessful.

Laura Dupont

Laura Dupont described herself as a six-year volunteer with a local stewardship group and said that she has observed a woeful lack of habitat protection. She noted that changes to provincial habitat protection laws have worsened the situation, and she also pointed to run-of-river projects as problematic. She characterized the provincial environmental assessment process as a 'sham' and said that not one proposal has ever been turned down. She said that much federal money is spent on promoting aquaculture, but little is spent on habitat protection. She questioned what has happened to the precautionary principle.

Don Carter

Don Carter introduced himself as a fisher and described his family as having been involved in the fishing industry for over 100 years. He said that mismanagement of the fishery is a major cause of the decline of the sockeye and that fisheries management does not seem to be worried about stock enhancement. He and his colleagues question the utility of the commission if there are DFO people on the commission. He concluded by saying that the only way to properly monitor the resource is if everyone shares in the monitoring, regardless of race, if everyone is treated the same way, and if everyone fishes together as one group.

David Beach

David Beach said he was very concerned about the lack of production in the Middle and North Arms of the Fraser River. He said that a variety of pollution sources make it impossible for salmon to migrate through the North and Middle Arms, pointing especially to Annacis Island sewage plant effluent, creosote on pilings, chemical incineration and urban runoff. He stated his concern that future development of Surrey will mean that the South Arm will become unsuitable for salmon migration. He questioned whether the wasteful global society can maintain a river with viable salmon.

Dorothy Beach

Dorothy Beach described her concern over the changes she has seen in the fish over her lifetime. She said that the public forum and the commission give her great hope that something brilliant will happen and expressed her hope that the mistakes made can be fixed. She described aquaculture as a plague on the wild salmon and mentioned pulp mills and creosote from pilings as other causes of the collapse.

John Madden

John Madden described his background as being in resource management, with some of his experience coming in government. He said that we know very little about fish farms but that we can do something about them. He expressed his frustration at not being able to find information on the economics of open-pen fish farms as compared to closed-containment fish farms. He said that if he was in charge of the DFO, he would find out how much more expensive closed-pen farms are and what could be done to

bring the costs down. He expressed his hope that the commission can shed light on the economics of closed-containment farms.

Erling Olsen

Erling Olsen introduced himself as a fisherman and said he could not understand why DFO cannot figure out why the 2009 returns were so low. He stated that DFO used to open the fishery if there were any surplus available but that this year it was shut down because of coho bycatch. He said at the time it was shut down the coho had not yet arrived. He said he also could not understand why the sockeye fishery is shut down by the Cultus sockeye, the survival of which he said is impossible.

Paul Dean

Paul Dean described his experience accompanying a commercial fisher and said it was staggering how many sockeye were out on the water. He called sockeye a gift and said that humans should be doing everything in their power to protect them. He said that this culture has done an abysmal job and that profit-hungry industry has driven threats against the salmon by putting money in the pockets of political parties. He questioned whether short-term gains were worth jeopardizing the viability of the salmon.

Donna Sonnenberg

Donna Sonnenberg introduced herself as a fisher. She said that everyone should fish together -- First Nations and non-First Nations – and that separation leads to problems in accounting for the catch. She stated that DFO does not tell the truth in its dealings with fishers and that fisheries should be managed by people who care, not by people in Ottawa with political motivations. She does not agree with ITQ systems because if she caught greater than her share the surplus would go to someone else or to the government. Her main concern was that there should be no fishing above Mission, but that now there is FSC and First Nations commercial fishing above Mission where the spawning areas are located.. She said that there is no discipline or enforcement in these areas and that in the past DFO has lied about the First Nations catch numbers.

Rod Marining

Rod Marining introduced himself as a co-founder of Greenpeace International. He said that while growing up he saw many streams in Vancouver get filled in. He expressed his fear that the Cohen Commission will do little to save the salmon. He said salmon farmers for much of the year do not feed the salmon but instead use lights to attract other fish to the pens, including salmon smolts. He reasoned that because of this loss of smolts, there is a cost of \$650,000 to create one farmed Atlantic salmon. He stated his opinion that coastal salmon farms should be shut down and said this will take much political courage.