

On November 20, 2003 several DFO staff attended a meeting with the B.C. Province and Industry (B.C. Salmon Farmers Association) to share preliminary information on sea lice results. John Pringle co-chaired this meeting. At this meeting Dick Beamish announced that Dr. Laura Richards, Regional Director, DFO Science Branch had recently instructed him to fully integrate his research on sea lice into the broader DFO "Pink Salmon Action Plan" (PSAP) program. If this is true then I request that you re-consider this decision.

I believe that integrating Beamish's sea lice research into the PSAP at this point will seriously diminish the credibility of the results from the PSAP. The research on sea lice that has been conducted by Beamish has been strongly and widely criticised in both the scientific community and the public media. This criticism has been directed not only to Beamish's earlier research and reporting on sea lice with Don Noakes, but also at Beamish's more recent work. For example, the David Suzuki Foundation recently criticized Beamish's sea lice research in August 2003 as being "unsound" and Beamish's release of preliminary results in a Times Colonist article just weeks after this cruise as "intended to confuse and cloud the serious issue ...". Criticism of DFO is not unusual, but unfortunately in this case I tend to agree with these criticisms. I think to a large degree it was the inadequacies of Beamish's research and conclusions that led to the lack of public confidence in DFO science and the intense pressure that forced DFO to initiate the very costly PSAP in March this year. The initial success we have achieved since March 2003 with the PSAP has begun to rebuild the credibility of DFO research on sea lice within the science community and also with the general public. I believe integrating Beamish and his sea lice research into the PSAP at this point will seriously undermine this new credibility and respect that we have worked so hard to earn for DFO with the PSAP.

I also do not want to be directly associated, either professionally or personally, with either Beamish or his research. I have spent 18 of my past 20 years of service in the DFO working as a research scientist at PBS and I have never found Beamish to be a good "team player". He always does more or less exactly as he pleases, regardless of the (often negative) impacts on other DFO staff and research programs. There are many personal examples I can relate, but perhaps just one that occurred at this recent meeting will suffice to support my position.

At the meeting on November 20, 2003 Beamish made a presentation of results from his recent research on sea lice. In his PowerPoint presentation he included a slide that summarized the results for sea lice infections of sub-adult salmon species that he said I had sampled in the Broughton in March 2003, as part of the marine monitoring component of the PSAP. Beamish then proceeded to say how these data supported his novel "theory" that sea lice attached to adult salmon returning to spawn may over winter in the Broughton, by transferring to the numerous sub-adult salmon that over-winter in the Broughton. Beamish stated that his new research showed this could be an important "alternative reservoir" for sea lice that subsequently infect juvenile pink and chum in the Broughton the following Spring. He noted that other people might not agree, but "we'll just publish this idea and then see what happens". This is not a novel idea even by any stretch of Beamish's vivid imagination. However, the possible implications of this are

huge and it was very provocative to the industry people and Province staff who attended this meeting. It is also potentially explosive if/when this “theory” is leaked or released by Beamish to the public.

I have no problem with Beamish claiming anything he wants to – if it affects only him and the credibility of his science. I do, however, have a problem when he directly implicates me without my agreement or even any prior discussion with me. In this case I did not provide Beamish with any fish samples or data from the sampling I did in the PSAP this year. I checked with Simon Jones and he said he also did not provide Beamish with either these fish samples or data. As I had not given anything to Beamish, I concluded it had to be from Simon’s “shop” and I asked Simon to investigate how Beamish might have obtained this information. Simon subsequently informed me that Beamish had obtained the data he used in this summary table through Mark Trudel. Apparently Mark had offered to assist Simon’s staff with analyzing some of the fish I had collected in the PSAP, and gave the results to Beamish after Beamish requested them from Mark. I also am concerned about Mark’s role in this, but he has been away and I have not yet been able to discuss this with him. In the interim I can perhaps overlook his actions as resulting from his inexperience in science research and protocol. However, there is no acceptable or legitimate excuse for Beamish’s behavior. Obtaining samples or data that are collected by someone else (in this case me) without their knowledge or permission is unethical. “Analyzing” these data and presenting the results in an important DFO meeting with industry and the Province, without even bothering to discuss these results first with either me or Simon, is extremely unprofessional. It was also personally embarrassing to me not to be able to answer questions raised about these data by industry at this meeting, because I have yet looked at these data for sub-adult salmon myself. How credible can DFO science be when a “novel hypotheses” like this is proposed by Beamish, when he cannot know where a critical piece of the information he is basing it on actually come from or how this should be interpreted? He does not know where these fish samples were collected or how the resulting data should be interpreted (at least in the opinion of the person (me) that collected these samples in the first place). This really is “shoddy” science.

No doubt if/when Beamish is ever confronted with this “lapse” in judgement he will just grin and shrug it off, as usual. I have seen this too many times in the past to be surprised any more, or to think that Beamish or his “research” will ever change. Two weeks have now elapsed since this meeting and I have passed Beamish several times in the hallways at PBS. Clearly even if he just had not had the time or opportunity to discuss these data with me prior to this meeting, this can no longer be a credible or acceptable excuse. If Beamish had any thought at all that he has done anything unethical or unprofessional, then I expect he would have found the time by now to discuss this with me and apologize. I can only assume Beamish either does not recognize what he did was wrong, or he does not care if he does recognize this. In any case, I do not want to work or even be associated with any DFO “senior scientist” with this kind of behaviour and ethics. Please do not put me on the same “team” as Dick Beamish.

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