Public Submission to the Cohen Commission

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Use of Scientific Information

Apart from recommendations on the Fraser River sockeye, it might be prudent for the Cohen Commission to include recommendations on how scientific evidence should be used in future policy making in the DFO.

I urge the Cohen Commission to recommend the employment of independent scientific panels to assess the scientific evidence as an aid to DFO policy making. This should be separate from the catch allocation panels or internal science forums. I also urge a fresh look at how policy makers use scientific information.

I found the scientific evidence and the testimony in the Inquiry has ranged from unassailable to, on occasion, nakedly partisan.

I have found little evidence in the transcripts and evidence that legal counsel of any, or all of the parties has examined just how the scientists working with the DFO engage with the policy makers and how the same policy makers use science in their deliberations to develop policies.

Conventional scientific training endorses what some observers have termed the linear 'hypodermic needle' model of policy making where scientifically credible research leads to credible policies being crafted by the policy makers.

The scientific and evidentiary roadblocks in the DFO that I observed in the Inquiry testimony leads me to suggest the linear policy development model is not the case at the DFO and I question just how science is used in DFO policy making.

For example, some recent observations in the USA[1], suggest that only 15% of respondents to a survey of participants in policy making, judged science researchers, academics and consultants as "very important" in informing policy, while 33% of respondents judged interest groups to be so. The author then explained why science doesn't inform policy in a linear fashion. One example is the necessity for scientific evidence to accumulate before a policy position can be developed. On this basis, applying this model to the DFO, a single piece of scientific research (such as molecular genetics regarding sea lice) is not likely to be sufficient to enable conclusions to be drawn in this conservative view of policy making.

Scientific research is also invariably 'translated, condensed, repackaged and reinterpreted' before it is used in policy making. Finally, and most interestingly, the author suggests that officials are most likely to use scientific information to justify a position which they already hold, rather than use new evidence to persuade them to adopt a different course of action - described as **'strategic use'** of scientific evidence. .

The strategic use of scientific evidence by DFO policy makers, is suggestively similar to the scenario above as described by Gormley , as evidenced by the use of science related to salmon aquaculture and the collateral inability of DFO policies to respond effectively to new and emerging threats to the wild salmon

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[1] REVIEW *From Science to Policy in Early Childhood Education;* William T. Gormley Jr.; 978 19 AUGUST 2011 , VOL 333 SCIENCE ; www.sciencemag.org

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