

## 2010 Fishermen's Forum Conference Speakers Notes

The Gulf Aquarium and Marine Station would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the Second Annual Fishermen's Forum "Moving towards Sustainability in Rural Fishing Communities" on March 26, 2010 in Cheticamp NS.

The forum was well attended with twelve speakers from around the maritimes presenting a wide range of topics relating to marine resources. The discussion and networks generated from the forum have widened perspectives both on key fisheries issues and on potential opportunities, and will generate future collaboration on resolution and new ventures.

The forum began with a panel discussion on the current state of the fisheries. Michel Biron of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) spoke about the snow crab tagging experiments that he has been conducting in the region to assess the snow crab population. Biron discussed the importance of ecosystem based management and stock assessment but cautioned that current research abilities do not yet have a systematic procedure for this type of assessment.

Jen Graham of the Ecology Action Center (EAC) spoke about the impacts of climate change on local fisheries. Jen highlighted that coastal communities are on the front lines of climate change and are going to bear the burden of its diverse effects. Jen believes climate change adaptation is becoming the focus as our understanding of the extent of those effects is continuing to grow. The migration and distribution patterns of fisheries species were targeted as a concern in warming waters, while ocean acidification was also mentioned as a concern, especially for species with hard shells, including snow crab, lobster, and shellfish that are so important to the local economy.

The second panel of the day discussed fisheries marketing challenges. Stuart Beaton was the first to give his views on the future of lobster marketing. Stuart, a retired fisherman, marketer and fisheries organizer had a pessimistic view for the lobster industry. He did not believe the local lobster industry would be approved for marine stewardship council (MSC) certification unless very significant changes were implemented in the fishery. It was Stuart's opinion that lobster prices will not be rising in the future and that they could continue to fall.

Sadie Beaton of EAC presented research she has been conducting on local direct fisheries marketing. Her public surveys showed that consumers are concerned that their product be sustainably harvested and that the local fisheries are supported. Sadie highlighted some examples of direct marketing initiatives in Nova Scotia where producers are co-operating with local restaurants, chefs and community groups, often using social media to advertise to the public. Sadie's research showed potential opportunities for small-scale producers in the local direct marketing niche.

Melinda Cole of the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association spoke about the Marine Stewardship Council certification (MSC). Melinda gave the audience a summary of what the MSC certification entailed and which fisheries are currently certified. It was noted that Sobeys, Loblaws and most markets in the European Union are going to require MSC certification. Ms. Cole emphasized the benefits of becoming certified, such as an increased market share, and improvement of the fisheries sustainability and traceability. However, a long list of negative concerns included the costs of certification, the lengthy assessment process, overwhelming paper work, additional fisheries regulations and the uncertainty if certification will result in a better price for the product. Melinda believes that there are still many unknowns in the certification process and that fishermen need to stay engaged in this process.

Bruce Cox of the Nova Scotia Fisheries Loan Board wrapped up the marketing panel by discussing new board regulations. Bruce admitted to some of the shortcomings of the loans but spoke of the benefits of the new licensing program in an aging industry. Only with such programs will the next generation of fishermen find it possible to enter the industry. He added that loans are also available for the establishment of new aquaculture facilities.

The third panel of the day tackled community based fisheries management. Ginny Boudreau of the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association spoke enthusiastically about the reality that community based fisheries management truly means the fishermen are becoming more engaged in all aspects of the management of the fishery. 'Community Based Management' (CBM) was not enough: we need to think of "Community Based "Integrated" Management"(CBIM) and how 'we as fishing communities engage in this process'. Ginny discussed the need for fishermen to listen to both local and global stakeholders, adding, "if you are not involved in management, you are not involved!" while addressing the time commitment involved beyond fishing itself. She felt that new management tools are needed to help fishermen to cope with this added burden. Ginny said strong leadership and fishing organizations are needed now more than ever to stay engaged in the evolving fishery. "Fishermen are the link between the community and the global economy." She ended with the statement that 'We need to manage the users, not the fishes'.

Dr. Tony Charles of St. Mary's University spoke about methods to improve community based fisheries management. These methods included incorporating local, scientific and traditional knowledge into management practices. Dr. Charles also mentioned that in some community's bottom up management and a community fishing rights system might have better management outcomes than the current top down approach. Coastal communities are better at looking at the big picture than government bureaucracies. Dr. Charles believes the right mixture of government, community and fishermen impute can result in a sustainable fishery. Fishing rights should be held by the community rather than the individual but we need to see "community" based management with a spatial focus, a regional rather than single community based approach. Community based management is not possible with species such as tuna, however the potential for lobster is huge. Such management must include community based research. Charles also proposed that community based management is wider than 'co-management' of the

resource, as it must involve the community itself. By working together communities can find what they are will to give, and what they are not willing to sacrifice as communities. A community behind its fishermen was said to be is very important.

Dr. Tony Charles was also the lunchtime keynote speaker, where he titled his address “Tying together fisheries, community and sustainability”. Dr. Tony Charles has worked on fishery and coastal topics for 25 years. His research focuses especially on economics, policy and management in fisheries, studying sustainability, community-based management, the ecosystem approach to fisheries, and methods of marine conservation. Tony was one of the original members of the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, Atlantic Canada’s fishery advisory body, and he was the founding director of Canada’s Ocean Management Research Network. He is a recipient of an international award, the Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation, as well as a Gulf of Maine Visionary Award for his work in Atlantic Canada. Currently Tony is a member of the Coastal CURA, a partnership of First Nations, fishery associations, community organizations and universities that is working toward greater involvement of coastal communities in coastal management.

Dr. Charles started his address by reminiscing about his time spent in Cheticamp during the cod collapse, an event he said that still haunts us today and proved as a “wake up call”. He said that just before the cod collapse a United Nations group called the commission on environment and development published the Brundtland report, which started the expression, ‘sustainable development’. Charles said that since then every government and company has felt as though they needed to be continuing economic growth while sustaining the environment for future generations. During his address Dr. Charles focused on sustainable fisheries and sustainable coastal communities, and the connection between the two.

The take away point was this: decisions in the fishery have a profound effect on the local community. A bad fishery decision can have a very negative effect on the community as a whole. Dr. Charles’ main concern was that there is disconnect between fisheries decision and coastal communities. He believes there is a complete split between decisions made in fisheries management (federal decision), and any real consideration of what is good for coastal communities. He said “We need to change that, so when we make decisions in fisheries, we think about impacts on communities.”

Dr. Charles also highlighted the connection between the fishery and our tourism industry. Noting that tourists love visiting the small coastal communities along our seashore to see the lighthouses and inshore fishing boats. Tony stated that coastal fisheries are important for their own sake, but they are also supporting parts of the economy that they usually don’t get credit for. Noting the owner operator policy’s are of vital importance in maintaining the inshore fishing boats and the small fishing town feel that lures tourists.

Charles called for more collaboration between Municipalities, and communities in collaborative research that ties together the values of the fishery and the community. He encouraged communities to get together and talk about its fisheries resources and how it

affects the health of the community.

Two afternoon panels followed the lunchtime address. The first panel discussed resource diversification in regards to aquaculture and alternatives to traditional fisheries. Andrew Bagnell of the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture gave an overview of the current state of aquaculture in Nova Scotia. Mr. Bagnell showed the audience the statistics of the growing industry and then underlined some of the opportunities that exist in shellfish, finfish, and aquatic plants production both in land based and open-water settings. Mr. Bagnell also discussed some of the misperceptions associated with aquaculture and reviewed his department's stringent environmental assessment process.

Geoff Nishi of the Mabou Harbour Watershed started off his presentation with a few kind words for the late John MacInnis of Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture who Geoff attributes to getting him involved in community development and oyster aquaculture. Geoff described the Mabou Harbour Watershed long term planning ideas, which included using the economic opportunity for oyster aquaculture to leverage funds to get the Mabou harbour, cleaned up. Geoff spoke about how all watershed stakeholders including the agricultural, fishing and forestry sectors and residential users needed to come together to develop and implement the harbour watershed plan. Today there are seven oyster aquaculturists growing product in the Mabou harbour and they are currently going through the environmental assessment to move their operations from on the bottom to suspended aquaculture.

Dr. Irene Nozaczek of the Institute of Island Studies wrapped up the aquaculture panel by discussing her very strong passion for the development of edible and medicinal marine plant products for rural enterprises. Irene spoke about the benefits of marine plants as food and medicine and their associated products. Personally, Irene has a line of commercial sea-plant products that she sells at local farmers markets and shops. Irene stressed the concept of high value and small volume production when dealing with locally harvested sea-plants in order to achieve a sustainable product. Dr. Nozaczek believes there is ample opportunity for the production of a variety of sea-plant products, which can also positively affect local tourism.

The final panel of the day was dedicated to increasing collaborative research opportunities in the fishery. Patty King, the general manager of the Fishermen's and Scientist Research Society spoke about her society's collaborative research accomplishments. The society's goals have been to collect information relevant to the long-term sustainability of the fishery. "We have a lot of knowledge to share". Patty said that typically scientists provide guidance in developing scientific protocols with fishermen, while fishermen have a key role in identifying research priorities. Patty spoke about numerous research projects currently on the go including a lobster recruitment index from standard traps project that involved over 170 volunteer fishermen in ten lobster fishing areas (LFA'S). Patty stressed that the benefit of this type of collaborative research is that the fishermen then trust the data because they have developed the project and collected the data themselves, and that the knowledge is collected in a scientific way.

The FSRS was established in 1994, and has approximately 400 members. The bylaws of the Fishermen's and Scientists Research Society prohibit lobbying, and the organization is strictly apolitical.

The last panel presentation was again contributed by Dr. Irene Nozaczek of the Institute of Island Studies. Irene's presentation focused on a model of community driven, academic led research, investigating gender in fisheries governance on Prince Edward Island. She highlighted the need for a more even power balance between community fishery groups and government. Irene stressed the need to get women and boat crew involved in the fisheries decision-making process, as she believes they possess a lot of local knowledge but are often left out of the planning process. Dr. Nozaczek also discussed some of her research initiatives with female captains and crew.

The final hour of the day was dedicated to open floor discussion. The panelist and audience gathered round in a close circle to discuss the happenings of the day and try to solve some of the unanswered questions. Valuable to GAMS was a discussion on how to initiate further collaborative research in the Cheticamp and greater northern Cape Breton region, with many valuable ideas being contributed by area fishermen. It was mentioned how important it was for GAMS as both a research and a community institution to attend as many of the Fishing Association meetings as possible.

A copy of all the panel power point presentations as well as a video of the keynote speech can be found at the GAMS web site at [www.cmag-gams.org](http://www.cmag-gams.org).

GAMS will be holding a conference on traceability and marketing, with a focus on the marine stewardship council (MSC) certification in October. The tentative date for the conference is October 15<sup>th</sup>.