

Salmon ITQs are 'not a done deal'

DFO moving without support, Harvesters' conference told

Fishermen shouldn't look at individual quotas in the salmon fisheries as a "done deal" despite DFO's efforts to promote them, fishermen at a coast wide conference were told Nov. 20.

"I'm one of the optimists who doesn't think that quotas are a done deal. But we need to have strong voices to oppose them and many ways to deliver that message," said Evelyn Pinkerton, a professor of resource and environmental management at Simon Fraser University and a long-time advocate for fishing communities.

"These quotas aren't a sure thing — I think they can be beaten," echoed UFAWU-CAW northern representative Joy Thorkelson, adding that DFO's efforts to get trollers to support quotas "didn't produce any agreement. That's a huge victory," she said.

Pinkerton and Thorkelson were among more than 60 fishermen, First Nations leaders, environmentalists and academics who took part in the day-long conference called by the B.C. Council of Professional Fish Harvesters. On the table was Treaties and Transition, the contentious report filed by the task force commissioners Peter Pearse and Donald McRae that calls for individual transferable quotas in the salmon fishery.

The proposal has run into widespread opposition since it was first put forward, with the UFAWU-CAW and the Native Brotherhood declaring their opposition and North Coast fishermen voting 95 per cent against quotas. In its own report, entitled Our Place at the Table, the Aboriginal Fisheries Commission called for a moratorium on ITQs until First Nations issues are addressed.

Despite that opposition, DFO's Pacific region has been quietly getting out the message that a plan to bring in salmon quotas is in the works, with implementing regulations expected to be in place by the 2005 season.

DFO spokesperson Ron Kadowaki reiterated that message in a presentation to the conference which noted that DFO was "working concurrently with First Nations and stakeholders to develop implementation plans as appropriate."

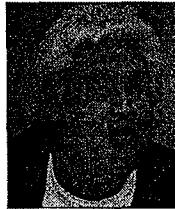
According to Kadowaki's presentation, work is proceeding on any "regulatory, legislative and program changes that may be required" and Fisheries Minister Geoff Regan is to "make initial decisions on implementation in early 2005 to inform implementation for the 2005 salmon fishery."

Challenged on what mandate DFO had to proceed with quotas, Kadowaki acknowledged that there was opposition to ITQs. But he was contradictory on whether DFO has already developed a proposal and is working to implement it.

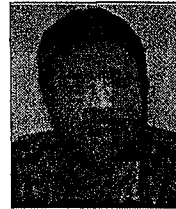
He insisted "no decisions have been taken yet, at least none that I've been informed of." He added, however, that if "any decision affects the 2005 season, it will have to be implemented before that."

He also noted that there would have to be amendments to the Fisheries Act, although he acknowledged that previous attempts to amend the Fisheries Act "haven't been too successful."

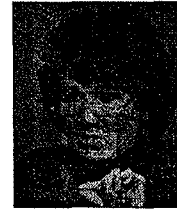
Throughout the day, conference participants looked at the record of ITQs in other fisheries and the impact they have had on jobs, quota leasing and community access to fisheries.



LUCAS



RITCHLIN



PINKERTON



PAULY

Simon Lucas, former co-chair of the AFC and a leader of the Nun-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council, said the council is "opposed to the idea of quotas."

Even since the licence buy-back, "unemployment has climbed to 70 per cent and our welfare budget has tripled," he said, adding that quotas would compound those losses.

Jay Ritchlin, the marine campaigner for the David Suzuki Foundation, emphasized the need to "expose the fallacy of ITQs" among environmentalists.

"Some have bought the idea that ITQs solve the conservation problem, but the evidence is that

ITQs are a mixed bag at best and certainly not an answer to conservation problems," he said.

Ritchlin agreed with Pinkerton and Thorkelson that quotas weren't "a done deal." A major display of opposition from the West Coast "could have a big impact on a minority Liberal government in Ottawa," he said.

Dr. Daniel Pauly, a professor at the UBC Fisheries Centre and a leading authority on world fisheries, also challenged the view that quotas are an answer to fisheries conservation.

In New Zealand, where most major fisheries are under quotas, the industry "has managed to

frame the issue to make it seem that all the problems are resolvable through quotas," Dr. Pauly noted.

"But it turns out that in New Zealand, quotas are the problem — the hoki and orange roughy stocks are going down rapidly. The New Zealand Department of Fisheries is living off the industry — it no longer represents the public good," he said.

"Given the trends in B.C. with stock problems, if you put ITQs on top of that, you're going to be in trouble," he emphasized.

"ITQs only add to the pressure on the stock — they're incompatible with sustainability."



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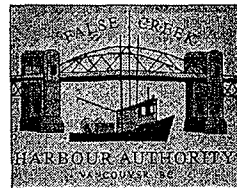
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