



# SPECIAL REPORT :

## PACIFIC SALMON FISHERIES INITIATIVE (PSFI)

*The Consensus is, the Industry cannot Survive and Grow in the Traditional Fragmented, Polarized and Disorganized Environment now Existing.*

BY TIM LYNCH

Access to full participation in the fish policy formulation process, access to fish, and involvement in credible fish conservation were identified as the goals for the Pacific Salmon Fisheries Initiative (PSFI). This was the outcome arising from a meeting of some forty commercial fishers that was held in the Fisherman's Hall in Delta on April 21, 2004. The objective of this meeting was to define the role and purpose of PSFI. Bruce Lansdowne, Interim President and Ian Angus, Interim Executive Director, facilitated the meeting.

Bruce reported on meeting Fisheries Minister, Hon. Geoff Regan during the Minister's visit to BC in March. A briefing paper (available on request) listing issues of concern identified by the founding members of PSFI was presented to the Minister. PSFI was encouraged by the Minister to engage in dialogue with local officials from his Department. This dialogue was reported to be on-going. Bruce also acknowledged that PSFI had met with some local political leaders and welcomed support being provided from all community leaders regardless of political affiliation.

The major issue of concern discussed at the meeting was the confusing flow of information about the fisheries policies and regulations that are being circulated around fishing communities in an uncoordinated manner. The lack of structure and process in the collection and dissemination of this information was seen as a major problem in achieving satisfactory outcomes for fishers.

There was general agreement that to be constructive the information flow had to be a two-way process. Not only do fishers need to know ahead of time what is being proposed in their industry, they must also have a structure in place through which they can give their input and interpretation of the situation as they see it. This two-way flow of information was seen as being a possible function for PSFI when it is duly constituted. In addition to better understanding positions between government and the fishing community, it was recognized that respective members of the fishing community needed to better understand each other's position.

By way of an example of the limitations in the present environment, a member of the Salmon Harvest Committee who was present described his role. He reported being somewhat overwhelmed by the information that is out there. He commented that in the absence of any mechanism for reporting back to the industry and receiving some collective viewpoint to take to the meetings his involvement was

meaningless. The value of participation on such structures was questioned given the lack of suitable resources for complementing the prevailing strengths and weaknesses to the positions being put forward by officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Some concern was expressed that the prevailing participation by fishers in the process could be interpreted as using front line industry representation in a passive and symbolic manner.

There was general acknowledgement among those present that any new initiatives in changing the way the wild salmon fishing industry is organized on the west coast must include representation and input from commercial fishers, First Nation's, as well as the sport fishing sector. Such dialogue was seen as providing a better appreciation among all interest groups of the relative contribution each party makes towards providing good quality, high protein food to local, national and international markets. A constructive collaborative relationship with local and national officials at DFO was seen as being critical towards achieving such a vision. Bruce Lansdowne reported that from his discussion with the Minister and local political leaders there is a desire to see such a vision being realized.

Noting that strength lies in numbers, Ian Angus stressed the importance of increasing membership and called on all persons present to encourage their fishing friends and business associates to support PSFI. The one time founding membership fee for joining PSFI is \$10.00. This token fee was seen as serving to actively demonstrate commitment and establish a record of interest by individuals who are committed towards the ideals of PSFI. Ian reported that currently PSFI has 360 members who hold 400 licenses and they are looking to attract all fishing community representatives including crewmembers. At present PSFI was said to exist because several individuals believe in its purpose and are giving freely of their time.

There was recognition that if it was to be successful, PSFI would have to serve as a conduit through which information could flow in both directions between its members and the policy formulation arms of government. The absence of such a democratically constituted process was seen as being a major cause of the polarities and divergent opinions that characterizes the fishing community in BC. The goal of PSFI was described as establishing a consortium of individuals committed to defining a new approach in the formulation and implementation of fishing policy on the west coast.

In support of establishing such a collaborative environment


## ★ special report: pacific salmon fisheries initiative (PSFI)

a constitution is being drafted by legal counsel to PSFI that will be put forward to the membership at an Annual General Meeting to be held later in the year. Through this process a Board of Directors would be duly constituted creating a governance structure that would serve to ensure accountability of the Board and Executive to the members. Some concern was expressed about the likelihood of such diverse interests coming together in support of the PSFI vision. The consensus was that the industry could not survive and grow in the traditional fragmented, polarized and disorganized environment existing today. With the appropriate structure in place more definitive action is planned for formulating favourable policies and to identify sources of funding in support of the principles that PSFI promotes.

In the course of the meeting there was frequent discussion about quotas, their relevance and how they should be defined. This was seen as being one of the first issues for the PSFI when it is duly constituted. Such positions of PSFI would only be taken in full consultation with members and with all members understanding each other's interests. The Species At Risk Act (SARA), which was recently enacted to foster favourable environments for birds and other wild life, was identified as possibly having a significant impact on the migratory paths of salmon. The fishing community needs to monitor this situation and be prepared to respond collectively. PSFI agreed

to keep members alert to the need for a responses to this Act.

Throughout the meeting frequent reference was made to salmon aquaculture. PSFI was said to be supportive of the Pacific Fisheries Research Conservation Council's call for an independent, scientific analysis of the issues related to net-cage salmon farming and wild salmon in British Columbia. Recognizing the degree of polarization that exists between proponents and opponents of the issue, an independent review body as proposed by the Council was seen as providing an unbiased point of view.

As a postscript to this report it would be inappropriate not to acknowledge events unfolding with the report released May 5, 2004 by the Joint Task Group on Post-Treaty Fisheries. Some of the issues and concerns discussed by the fishers who met in the Delta Fisherman's Hall on April 21 2004, and by members who have been active in supporting the constitution of the Initiative, are reflected in the Task Group's report. The PSFI Board is organizing meetings to review how the Joint Task Group's Report will impact on its members and will be responding to the Minister's request for input. 

Information about PSFI and its upcoming meetings can be obtained by telephoning the PSFI office in Steveston at 604.271.3474 or by email [psfi@telus.net](mailto:psfi@telus.net)

Send comments about this article to Tim Lynch: [tim@infoynk.ca](mailto:tim@infoynk.ca)



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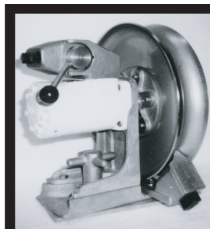


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