

Dehcho First Nations; AAROM Meeting on the Great Slave Lake Fishery

Meeting Notes;

Day One, March 7, 2011

During day one we had very active discussions on the improvement of involvement of First Nations in the Great Slave Lake Fishery. Currently the FN's do not feel adequately represented in mgmt. decisions being made on Great Slave Lake, especially concerning the commercial fishery. All agreed that the Great Slave Lake Advisory Committee (GSLAC) does not provide balanced representation for the Dehcho FN's or the other FN's for that matter.

There was also discussion about KFN finding funding for fisheries development such as accessing boats for participation in the fishery, building a small economic fish plant to replace the present monstrosity. Most Manitoba fish receiving stations are contracted by FFMC to provide that service. The plant would also facilitate local sales to the various NWT communities.

With the present economic decline in the fishery it was felt that this was an opportune time to restructure the fishery so that it is more profitable and better structured for First Nation involvement.

We will be forming a working group to tackle the various issues.

Major concerns were:

1. Developing a Strategy to promote First Nation Involvement in the GSL Fisheries
 - Involvement in Mgmt. of the fish stocks and fisheries
 - E.g. Optimum sustainable yield instead of maximum sustainable yield

- Strategy to successfully involve Dehcho First Nations (especially Katlodeeche, West Point < Providence, Kakisa) in the Commercial Fishery
 - Skills/training
 - Economic and Capital Plans
 - i. Boats and Fish plant
 - ii. Restructuring of the quotas, closed areas, licensing
 - E.g. Reduce quotas to maintain and improve CPUE
 - E.g. Adjust closed areas to increase economics of the fishery
 - iii. Marketing
2. Improving the DFO consultation process with First Nations
 - Direct consultation
 - Improved representation and structure of GSLAC
 3. A discussion of Conservation and Protection issues.

Present:

Katlodeeche: Chief Roy Fabian, Pat Martel and Peter Sabourin, CEO Scotty Edgerton

Fort Providence Resource Mgmt. Board: Louie Constant and Ted Landry

George Low: DFN AAROM Coordinator

Regrets: Chief Lloyd Chicot, Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge, Chief Abner Cayen

Day 2; March 8th, 2011-03-22

Deanna Leonard of Fisheries Management, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) attended the second day.

She explained the DFO, Allocation Transfer Program, which provides access for First Nations to become involved in commercial fisheries. This program can provide funding for boats (FN ownership), business strategy development, training, vehicles for slurry transport, etc.. The program will **not** provide funding for building fish plants.

However GNWT – ITI (and we would have to check with them) may be interested in a proposal which would replace the existing inefficient plant in Hay River. They also may be interested in developing the local fish market. There is a need for consistent supply and transportation to stores and restaurants.

FFMC may also be interested in developing a new GSL fish receiving facility (plant) with a First Nation willing to take the initiative.

Deanna explained the Integrated Fishery Mgmt. Plan (IFMP) for GSL whitefish. The First Nations will be fully consulted on the plan.

Chief Fabian was concerned that First Nations were marginalized regarding the GSL commercial fishery. Their history of commercial fishing during the trapping era for their dog teams and the communities including the Missions, the RCMP and the fur traders does not seem to count for anything. DFO has always considered their only interest being in subsistence when this is not the case. There is no better time to review the present management of the fisheries particularly the commercial fishery which is in an ebb due to the sagging economics in the fishery.

First Nations want a part in the new fishery. They want their fair share of quotas and/or licences. Maybe the way the fishery is licenced needs to change.

Also First Nations want the fisheries managed in a harmonious manner; not just maximum sustainable yield for whitefish without regard to other species such as lake trout and inconnu. It's no use to fish up to the traditional whitefish quota of 1.7 million kilograms if the catch per unit effort again declines to a half a box to a net as it did in the 1980's. Also there should be a review of mesh size and bring it up to 5 ¼" again so we get larger whitefish that are more marketable.

Deanna replied that the FN's had a right to be a part of the commercial fishery and that in fact the Allocation Transfer Program was there make that possible. Individual quotas may be the way to go instead of A and B Certificates which allow an open ended quota system. These changes could all be discussed during the IFMP process which is in the works right now.

Deanna thinks GSL has the potential to be an amazing fishery. It is important that it becomes an ecological friendly fishery with certification in the Marine Stewardship program which will allow ECO Labelling. The GSL fishery is in the process of being assessed and DFO is working towards improving fisheries mgmt. on the lake each year with the goal of receiving certification. This is why the logbook requirement for fishermen is important.

Deanna encouraged the First Nations to apply for multi-year funding under the Allocation Transfer Program to hire a local knowledgeable consultant to develop a strategic business plan for future fishery involvement.

A working group consisting of Scotty, Peter Sabourin, Louis Constance, and George Low will keep Chief Fabian updated on our progress in developing a strategic plan, accessing the Allocation Transfer Program for funding and generally improving First Nation access and success in the fishing industry.

Fishery Officer, Gerald Fillatre reported on the past year of conservation and protection efforts on Great Slave Lake and the Dehcho. Report is attached.

Robert Lamalice complained that First Nations were not being properly consulted by DFO. An example was the changing of the closed area off Hay River from 5 miles to 10 miles. The DFO relies on consulting with GSLAC but the First Nations do not feel properly represented on this Committee and want to be consulted directly on mgmt changes which affect them.

Deanna apologized and insisted that the FN's would be fully consulted during the IFMP process which is under way.

The First Nations have a lot to contribute to this process and will be working with DFO to develop a strong mgmt plan and a successful First Nation Fishery.

Present Day 2

Robert Lamalice, Peter Sabourin, Louis Constance, Ted Landry, Chief Roy Fabian, Scotty Edgerton, George Low, Deanna Leonard and Gerald Fillatre.

If I have missed any important items, please let me know.

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