

Coast of Bays Coastal Planning Committee Meeting
Harbour Breton Town Hall
Harbour Breton, NL.
April 6th, 2006.

Attendance:

Conrad Collier – Coast of Bays Corporation
Jeffery Roberts – Fishers Committees
Herb Dunphy – Municipalities
Craig Mercer – Newfoundland Salmonid Growers Association
Baxter House – Tourism
Bret Pilgrim – Coastal Planning Coordinator
Joan O’Brien – Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Ex-officio
Dawn Mercer – Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Ex-officio

Regrets:

Ross Hinks – Conne River Band Council
Pius Howse – Rec. Boaters & Cabin Owners
Steward May – Harbour Authorities
Kevin Lawrence – FFAW – Inshore Fishers
Eric Day – FFAW – Processors

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 with two items to add to the agenda – 1. Update on the Coastal Planning meeting in Hermitage, 2. Coastal Planning Coordinator funding.

1. The meeting commenced with the introduction of Dawn Mercer (DFO). Due to some changes within DFO, Joan will be taking leave from her role as an ex-officio member on the committee for a while. In the mean time, Dawn will be taking over Joan’s roles and responsibilities as a member of the committee. Joan requested that she is kept up to date on the Committees activities and will assist where possible.
2. After reviewing of the minutes of the last meeting (Feb. 22nd, 2006) no amendment was necessary.
Motion to adopt minutes – Craig
Second – Jeffery
3. **Update: Fishers Committee Letter of Support**
On Feb. 22nd, 2006 Jeffery Roberts requested a letter of support from the Coastal Planning Committee supporting a letter from the Fishers Committee to DFO requesting that the Crab (and other species) fishery opening earlier. The committee provided a letter of support including a caveat that reflected the mandate of the committee stating “This support is offered providing that, in the opinion of DFO Science, such an early opening of the season would not have an adverse effect on the recruitment to these stocks”.

4. **Update: Submission of a Letter of Concern**

Pius received a letter from Mr. Russell Engram (Gaultois) regarding personal concerns regarding aquaculture activities within the Bay d'Espoir and Gaultois Passage area. His letter highlighted three primary concerns:

- a. The impact of excess aquaculture feed on the ocean environment and the possible contamination of wild stocks.
- b. Concerns related to the accumulation of marine debris throughout the region in relation to marine safety and the physical state of marine areas.
- c. Concerns regarding newly proposed aquaculture sites in Snook's Harbour and Harbour Gallais and the impact this may have on recreational activity.

Mr. Engram's letter and Bret's response were presented to the committee and discussion as to how these issues could be addressed.

Craig – in the early days of the aquaculture industry in the region, the issue of feed waste on the ocean floor may have been a valid concern because no feed counter was used in the feeding process. However, today underwater cameras are used to monitor the amount of feed entering cages. Once the camera shows that fish have stopped consuming feed and/or pellets start to reach the bottom of the cage, no more feed is placed in the cage. This procedure is used to minimize the amount of feed waste, saving money, and minimizing environmental impacts.

Also, proponents are now obligated under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) to conduct assessments of potential aquaculture sites before cages are placed. This assessment is part of the proposal process. Assessments are also conducted while the site is in use and once that site is no longer being used. Also, fallowing periods are also used to allow sites to rejuvenate after it has been used for a stock growth.

Ropes are a problem mainly with abandoned mussel sites. Regarding the concern of wild fish becoming contaminated by farmed fish, the reverse is often the case – farmed fish contaminated by wild fish – sea lice and a variety of diseases. Craig provided several examples from around the region to support this fact.

Conrad indicated that one of the committee's roles is to educate on topics of concern. Conrad, with input from Craig, will draft a letter in response to the concerns of aquaculture feeding and the ocean bottom environment.

Joan – the issues of marine debris has been brought up in other areas throughout the region as well, Conne River being one example.

Conrad suggested a Public Relations Campaign be implemented to raise awareness of the issues associated with marine debris. The initial step will be to draft a newspaper article for submission in The Coaster.

A public poster campaign was also suggested. These posters would be supplied by DFO (specs. 8.5 x 11, laminated card)

Bret suggested that the “Coast of Bays Coastal Planning Committee” be included on the posters.

The idea for a Coastal Planning Committee logo was briefly discussed. This will be something to pursue at a later time.

5. Update: Small Fish Protocol in Fortune Bay

Conrad contacted Lou Ryan (DFO – Area Chief Resource Manager) regarding the Small Fish Protocol. A process is in place – DFO meets with fishers to reach an agreement in terms of specifics (e.g. undersize fish measurement).

Jeff explained that DFO has placed the onus on the fishers to report catches of undersized fish. In some areas, undersized fish that are being landed are sold so there is no immediate incentive to report undersized catches. Jeff suggested that DFO should be conducting more monitoring. Monitors at landing locations are only responsible for weighing catches for quotas. There was a discussion of a process that might aid the Small Fish Protocol to work. Conrad will discuss this with the Chairs of the Fishers Committees in the region.

6. Update: Scallop Dragging on Lobster Ground

Speaking with Lou Ryan, Conrad inquired into the damage, if any, scallop dragging can have on lobster habitat. Mr. Ryan indicated that he was unsure of any science that studied the direct impacts of dragging.

Jeff noted that there is currently no regulations on scalloping dragging on lobster ground. Conrad asked Dawn if this could be a good research project to determine if scallop dragging impacts exist. Dawn will look into existing research in this area.

7. Overview of the Coordinator Report

Bret provided a brief overview of the Coordinator’s final report. The report outlined the responsibilities of the Coordinator, and various Coastal Planning activities from November 2005 to March 2006. The Coordinator’s six primary responsibilities were to:

- a. Finalize the *Terms of Reference* for the Coastal Planning Committee.
- b. Finalize and begin implementing the *Coastal Planning Communications Strategy*.
- c. Update the coastal planning website.
- d. Research outlines of Coastal Management Plans.
- e. Determine and prioritize issues.
- f. Assist the Coastal Planning Committee as required.

Bret informed the committee that the report will be available on the Coastal Planning website in the coming weeks.

Bret suggested that researching the impact, if any, aquaculture might have on lobsters is a worthwhile project to consider in the future.

Craig recommended talking with Doug Caines to obtain names of lobster fisherman that often fish for lobster around aquaculture cages to obtain their experiences.

Conrad – Bret’s contract expires in April. Currently, proposals have been submitted to various groups to secure funding to keep him on and keep the Coastal Planning process rolling.

8. Stakeholder Issues, Comments and Concerns

a. Jeff Roberts (Fishers Committee’s)

- A positive response to the fishers committee request to open the fishery earlier this year.
- The processing plant in Hermitage is doing very well.
- There was a positive response to the Coastal Planning meeting held in Hermitage on March 10th, 2006. Those who attended the meeting are interested in the process and the coastal planning initiative.

b. Herb Dunphy (Municipalities)

- The need for infrastructure in the Milltown region to address potential for breach of bio-security in the aquaculture sector. A process is ongoing to have a transfer of ownership and to utilize the wharf at Milltown for inflows to the industry.

c. Craig Mercer (NSGA)

- Issues of cleanliness in and around processing plant wharves.
- Need to inform and educate the public on aquaculture activities.

d. Joan O’Brien (DFO)

- Oceans Day will be held on June 8th. The committee should consider getting the region involved by planning activities. Joan would like to be informed of plans.
- Inquired about the FFAW Processor seat on the committee. Conrad will contact Eric Day to determine if he, or representative, is still interested in representing the processors on the committee.
- MUN Presents will be held October 10th and 11th.

- Suggested the committee meet for a full day session on either the 9th or 10th of October to coincide with MUN Presents. At that time, several Coastal Management projects will be complete. The results could be presented and the committee could hold discussions to compile a list of issues and ideas that could be pursued by the committee.

9. Ecological and Biological Significant Area Maps

A set of maps outlining significant areas throughout the Coast of Bays region was presented to the committee. The maps need some work to refine areas that could be considered significant. It was decided that DFO would supply several copies of the maps that could be distributed to committee members and seek further input by individuals in their area in the upcoming months. Further committee consideration into significant areas will be provided at the next meeting in October. It was also suggested by Joan that gathering input to these maps could be another responsibility of the Coastal Planning Coordinator.

10. Scheduling next meeting

Next meeting will be a daylong meeting on October 9th or 10th.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Craig Mercer.