



Forums

April 18, 2016

- Leaders Congress
- MAPC Commissions
- MAARS Secretariate
- SARA IKANAWTIKET
- MAPC Administration

Mr. Adam Burns,
Senior Director,

Integrated Fisheries Resource Management
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RE: Gulf Atlantic Halibut Review

Dear Mr. Burns:

Governmental
APRO Councils

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I don't have answers to this situation save to say, our three Aboriginal Communal Commercial Fishery entities, for all intents and purposes are not meaningful participants in the Atlantic Halibut Fishery.

The Atlantic Halibut decline goes back several decades, and during the eighties and nineties, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in their management of the Atlantic Halibut Fishery, made an attempt to retire "groundfish licenses". This retirement attempt was not too successful and many retained their licenses, in the hopes that the fishery would rebound or return.

The absence of Aboriginal Peoples from the commercial fishery as a result of many circumstances, was not addressed until the 1990's with the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy (AFS) and in 1999 with the Allocation Transfer Program (ATP) of the AFS, and for a brief period with the MRI. In the instance of the ATP and MRI, no new fishing effort or pressures to the fisheries were to apply, rather the programs relied on "buy backs" to in effect "accommodate aboriginal fishers by reduction".

The effect, for the three Aboriginal Communal Commercial Fisheries Entities which the Maritime Aboriginal Aquatic Resources Secretariate (MAARS) provides advice and support, resulted in just four Aboriginal Communal Commercial Fisheries ground fish Licenses throughout the Gulf Region for the three communities. By the peculiar arrangements for the division of quota to either accommodate provincial share, or share between different ground fish fishing groups or between Atlantic Halibut areas, the results created in many instances "an Atlantic Halibut license poundage quota which is fished out in a matter of hours".

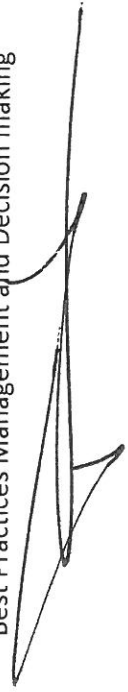
I know that everyone in clamoring for more, and there are a lot of interests to satisfy. As a thought, would it be beneficial to spread a bit more to the Aboriginal Communal Commercial Fisheries, since we are conducting a community fishery, rather than a private fishery. Also, shouldn't there be some priority or favoured support to accommodate our Aboriginal Fisheries to use ATP funds to buy back some ground fish licenses from those ground fishers who may wish to sell their licenses or retire from the fishery.

I know how difficult it is to change old habits and old practices and an old and long ground fish management history evolved over time. However, given that every ground fisher who is eligible to harvest Atlantic Halibut, should have the opportunity to fish. Should we not look at introducing some uniformity as to some reasonable "poundage" which each license holder can harvest within an accommodating TAC throughout the whole region. If there are too many licenses in existence for the total allowable TAC for the Region, then we need to first address that overabundance to what is available.

It begs the question, how can anyone call a one or two hour fishing effort a commercial fishery. How can a landed maximum landing of one hundred or two hundred pounds of Atlantic Halibut be called a commercial fishery.

In closing, I would also like to request a further meeting on the subject, to better understand what DFO is planning for the Atlantic Halibut Fishery, short and long term. We would like to dialogue with suggestions and views on how to expedite the meaningful involvement of the Aboriginal Communal Commercial Fisheries in the Atlantic Halibut Fishery. We also need to learn and understand the issues which other ground fish license holders have about the existing Atlantic Halibut Fishery.

Advancing Aboriginal Fisheries & Oceans Entities
Best Practices Management and Decision making



Roger J. Hunka
Director

RJH;jh

Cc Tim Martin, Mime'j Seafoods Ltd.
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