

# Watershed Committee

## Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 27 March 2002 in the Ridgeview Motel Hospitality Room

### Present:

Paul Smith- WCVI AMB; Jon Banas- Resident; Cameron Forbes- Resident; Jim Mitchell- Village of Gold River; Rory Glennie- Outdoor Writers of Canada; Dick Dennison- G.R. Resident; Floyd Cole- Grieg Seafood; Tim Davies- Grieg Seafood; Peter Gibson- Grieg Seafood

**1.0 Paul (chair) called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.**

**2.0 Introductions around the table**

**3.0 The agenda was approved by consensus**

Paul added some correspondence under #8 to the agenda.

**4.0 Minutes of the previous meeting**

There were no changes or additions.

**5.0 Old business arising from the minutes**

Jim asked if there were any dates from Dave Davies on the Pink enhancement presentation yet. Paul replied that he had not heard anything yet.

**6.0 Minutes of previous meeting approved by consensus**

**7.0 Correspondence**

Paul talked about Roger's letter concerning exotic mussel farming in Nootka Sound. Jim asked if Roger would be attending tonight meeting so we could question him on his concerns. Paul replied that he is going to try and make it, but he is in Nanaimo. Peter talked briefly about Grieg Seafood's proposals for mussel farming. He stated that the Mediterranean mussels were chosen because of economic reasons. Peter talked about local mussels dying off in the summer as is stated in Roger's letter and places where these mussels are grown in BC. This species is presently being cultured in Puget Sound, Strait of Georgia and Barclay Sound. The mussel was introduced to California midway through the last century and its habitat has been expanding north. Jim asked if this discussion could be tabled until the next meeting, as Roger wasn't available to address his concerns. Consensus was reached to table exotic mussel discussions to the next meeting. Grieg asked to be invited to this meeting. Paul asked if everyone had a copy of the Salmon Aquaculture Review and NTC Submission documents. As these are a long read, Paul recommended using these for information purposes, as there will be other public meetings with Grieg Seafood's in the months to come. Paul talked about letter from Steve Baille and Dave Davies on the two fish fences within the Gold River Watershed. One being on Hutchinson Creek and the other being placed on Dunlop Creek. The Gold River Stream Keepers have been discussing these with Dave and Steve and went on a field trip to look at both systems for suitability. Dave has said it is a go, so the fences can be built right away. Paul asked Dick if he has been given the go ahead by the Gold River Rod and Gun Club to tackle this. Dick replied that their meeting was before

the issue came up so Paul will have to contact the executive for direction, as they won't meet again until April 11. Paul will do this. Next under correspondence was a letter from the Vancouver Island Voice For The Environment group requesting support for a letter on Streamside Protection Regulations. Jim questioned the credibility of this group, i.e. are they like the Sierra Club or Greenpeace? Paul gave a little background on the newly formed advocacy group explaining that it is made up of only stewards and stewardship groups from Vancouver Island. Dick asked Paul what his recommendation was. Paul replied that Streamside Protection is an important issue that is being threatened like other environmental regulations by the province and we should support this letter. Consensus was reached to add the Gold River Watershed Committee's name to the letter. Next up was the document written by Alexandra Morten on fish farms. Jim questioned the credibility of this document, as there was no reference in her study on protocol as to how she came to these conclusions. Paul stated that he thought this was just a summary document and not the actual study. Tim stated that he too had concerns over the credibility as Alexandra had not taken temp/salinity readings in her study and she only shows the average not the variance in the study summary and any photos are only of extreme cases. Paul asked if Alexandra was an RPBio. Floyd replied no she was not to the best of his knowledge. Tim mentioned that DFO has done a study of the same area and their findings are available on the Internet.

#### **8.0 New Business**

Paul talked about the concerns over the cable and waste on the ocean floor in front of the old mill site as brought to his attention by a concerned resident. Jim Fiddick's letter addressing this issue was discussed. Jim asked if cleaning up this mess would disturb the ocean floor hence releasing any toxic accumulation into the water. Paul stated that DFO would address this if there were the possibility this would happen. Dick talked about other waste down there like wood and the fact that most of it can be seen at a low tide. Some discussions followed on previous practices of the mill in the old days. Consensus was reached for Paul to draft a letter to be sent to DFO and cc'd to Bowater requesting information on the clean up plans and if they included the foreshore.

#### **9.0 Action Items**

1. Paul will contact G.R. Rod and Gun executive on fish fence.
2. Paul will draft up a letter for review to Dfo and Bowater on foreshore cleanup.

#### **10.0 Presentations**

Grieg Seafood gave their presentation on their plans in Nootka Sound. Peter started by talking about their proposed development plans. They already have farms in Esperanza Inlet. They are looking at seven more sites in Muchalaht Inlet, Hanna Channel and Zucairte Channel. A total of eight sites combined between the Esperanza and Nootka areas are needed for basic production. Jim asked if Grieg were looking at working mussel sites in conjunction with fish farm sites. Reply was no. Dick asked about salinity and First Nations issues in Hisnit Inlet. Peter replied that they've just been made aware of the First Nations concerns and are working to resolve them. Peter stated that they would be growing 640 tonnes of mussels per year on six 10-hectare lots. Jim asked what the carrying capacity of these sites is. Tim replied that they would

start with 20 rafts and monitor capacity with the goal to have a total of 40 rafts. Paul asked about the importation of Atlantic salmon eggs and the possibility of disease transfer. Peter responded that Grieg would take eggs from brood stock and not import eggs from another country. Brood stock might be from somewhere else in BC. All females are screened and eggs are externally disinfected. If female screening results come back positive for disease, then all eggs belonging to that female are destroyed and disinfected. Peter talked about the benefits to the community being the creation of 129 full time jobs with future expansion to 170 being possible. This will mean a 5.2 million payroll and Grieg's investment will be over 30 million. Peter continued to talk about the farm operations and a new innovation using feed cameras to determine food conversion efficiency and monitoring fish behaviour. Peter recommended that the committee take a tour of a farm for a better picture. Jim stated that the village also would like this tour and we should coordinate this in the summer. Peter talked about fish escape prevention and management issues. Jon asked if Sechelt was still raising Atlantics. Peter replied no they have gone to Chinook because of warm water. Peter talked about net strengths. Grieg net strengths start at between 35-50 % of above provincial regulations and net strength decreases by 10% over the first five years of the net life. Paul asked if they used anti-fouling paint on their nets. Peter replied they use a copper based anti-fouling paint similar to what is used in the boating industry. They are also required to check for copper in their bottom-monitoring program. Jim asked if they have a list of compounds that they are required to test for. Tim answered yes they do and named off some of them for Jim. Tim explained that one of the reasons the province hasn't lifted the moratorium yet is because they're still finalizing a new Aquaculture Waste Management Regulation. Tim discussed the preliminary steps taken on the whole tenure before a pen is put into place i.e. current, video monitoring, dive transects, and deep water transects with remotely operated vehicle of the whole tenure and not just where the pen sites will be placed. Monitoring will continue for the whole tenure once operations are under way. Peter talked about the predator nets and their effectiveness in stopping seals and sea lions etc. Dick asked if they have a permit to kill seals and how many seals can they kill. Peter replied that yes they have a permit to kill seals and sea lions but not otters. Dick asked what is done with the bodies once they've been shot. Peter replied that due diligence is required on making best effort to recover them. Peter stated that it is Grieg's policy not to keep guns on site and it is their intention not to shoot seals and sea lions. The predator nets should allow them to meet this objective. Peter talked about the sites being fallowed regularly. Monitoring will determine the fallow times, which is usually 3 months. The next discussion surrounded sea lice control. Sea lice have to be treated before they reach adult stage to stop out breaks. Slice is the brand name of compound used to treat sea lice. The chemical is Emamectin benzoate. Jim asked how long it takes for the chemical in Slice to break down in the environment. When emamectin benzoate is bound to microbially active soil (aerobic soil with bacteria) in the presence of light it has a half-life of 5 days. Meaning every five days the amount available is cut in half. The emamectin benzoate molecule becomes dissociated in seawater (ph of 8) and as a result binds tightly to sediment surfaces taking it out of the water column. Only 2-3 % of the molecule was available from the seawater

after marine sediment exposure. The half-life of the molecule bound in marine sediments is calculated to be ~170 days. This information is all taken from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency 66/99 document suggesting the agency approve emamectin benzoate for licensing to treat sea-lice. It was subsequently licensed in Scotland. A copy of this report will be forwarded to Paul. Paul asked if any studies or monitoring was done to determine what effects these chemicals and feed waste were having on the prawns and shrimp around sites. Tim replied not at this time. Dick asked what is a bad number of sea lice on fish. Floyd stated that they don't like to see more than 5-6 females on a 6 kg fish. Cameron asked if the government also monitors fish farm sites or is this left up to the company. Reply was yes the government samples to compare the data between the two. Jim asked if ISO certification is being looked at. Peter replied that there is something similar from Norway that is being used called Total Quality Management but it is built on the ISO platform so it could be changed should Grieg seek external certification. Jon asked how they manage around IHN. Peter replied that it is one of their greatest challenges because they can't treat for IHN right now, as it is a viral disease. They are working on it as we speak. Paul stated he had some e-mailed questions from members that couldn't make the meeting and the first one is: why did Grieg stop supporting the Gold River Chinook Project. Peter responded that they support the project with 36 k every year. Peter went on to say that the conflict is between Bowater and the Gold River Chinook Project. Grieg holds no animosity towards the Gold River Chinook Project and it was never their intention to run them off of the property to increase Grieg's property size. Grieg will continue to work with the community in any way they can. Paul asked if night-lights will be used to increase production and if any studies have been done to show the effects of predation on wild salmon smolts that are attracted to the lights. Tim replied that two studies were done. Dr. Doug Hay of DFO was involved in both to determine predation on wild smolts due to night lighting. The second is a DFO technical paper and should be available on the Internet. The first report was sponsored by BC Fisheries and is available from the province. The findings in both reports are that there is no real threat posed by the use of into the cage units by the lights. Tim added that a third study was done at a processing plant looking at stomach contents. Very few stomachs had anything in them other than pellets or small net fouling organisms. Paul thanked Grieg for their presentations.

#### **11.0 Open Discussion**

Discussion followed around Grieg's commitments to the community in various forms i.e. donations in kind, monetary support for initiatives and projects around fish and fish habitat and employment opportunities.

#### **12.0 Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm. Next meeting is on Wednesday, April 24/02 same time, same place.