

British Columbia's Multi-Species Groundfish Fishery: A Fisherman's Perspective

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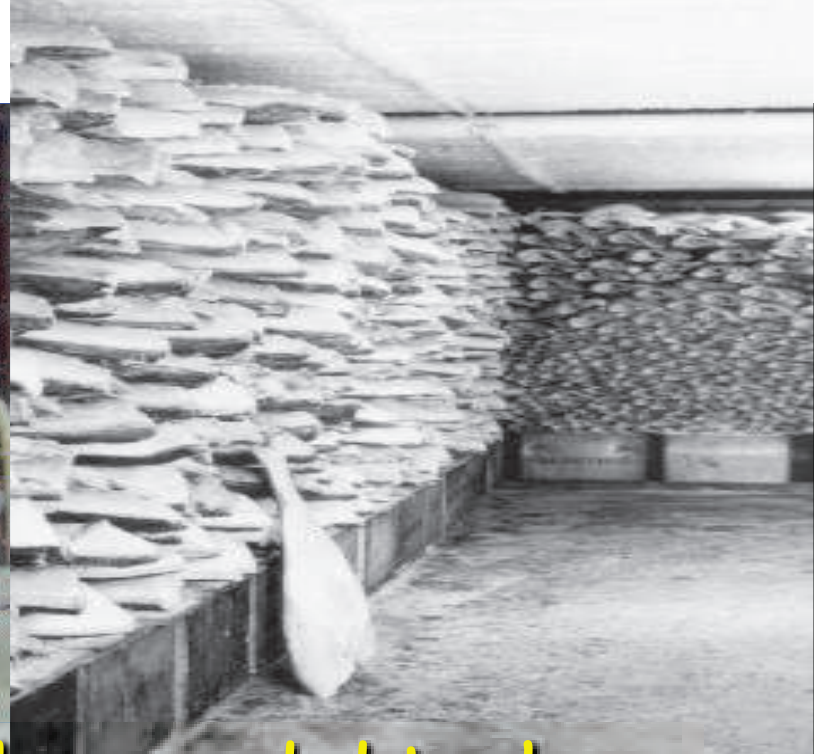
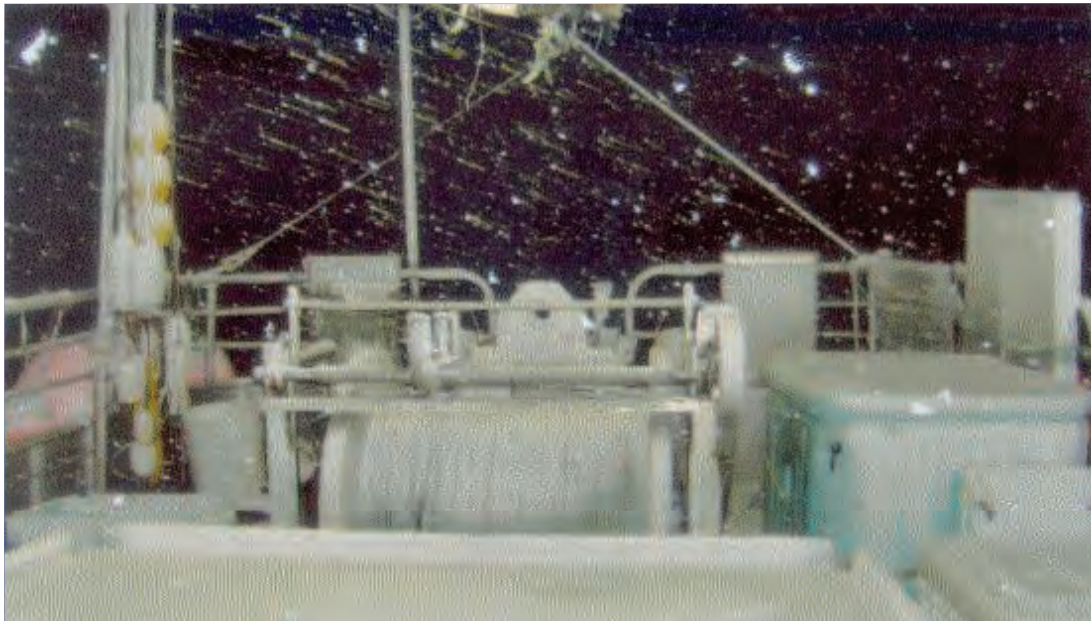
SUSHI-MON
On Mount Washington

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- The British Columbia groundfish fishery has been completely reformed. How did we get there? How is this good for the resource, harvesters, processors, buyers and consumers?



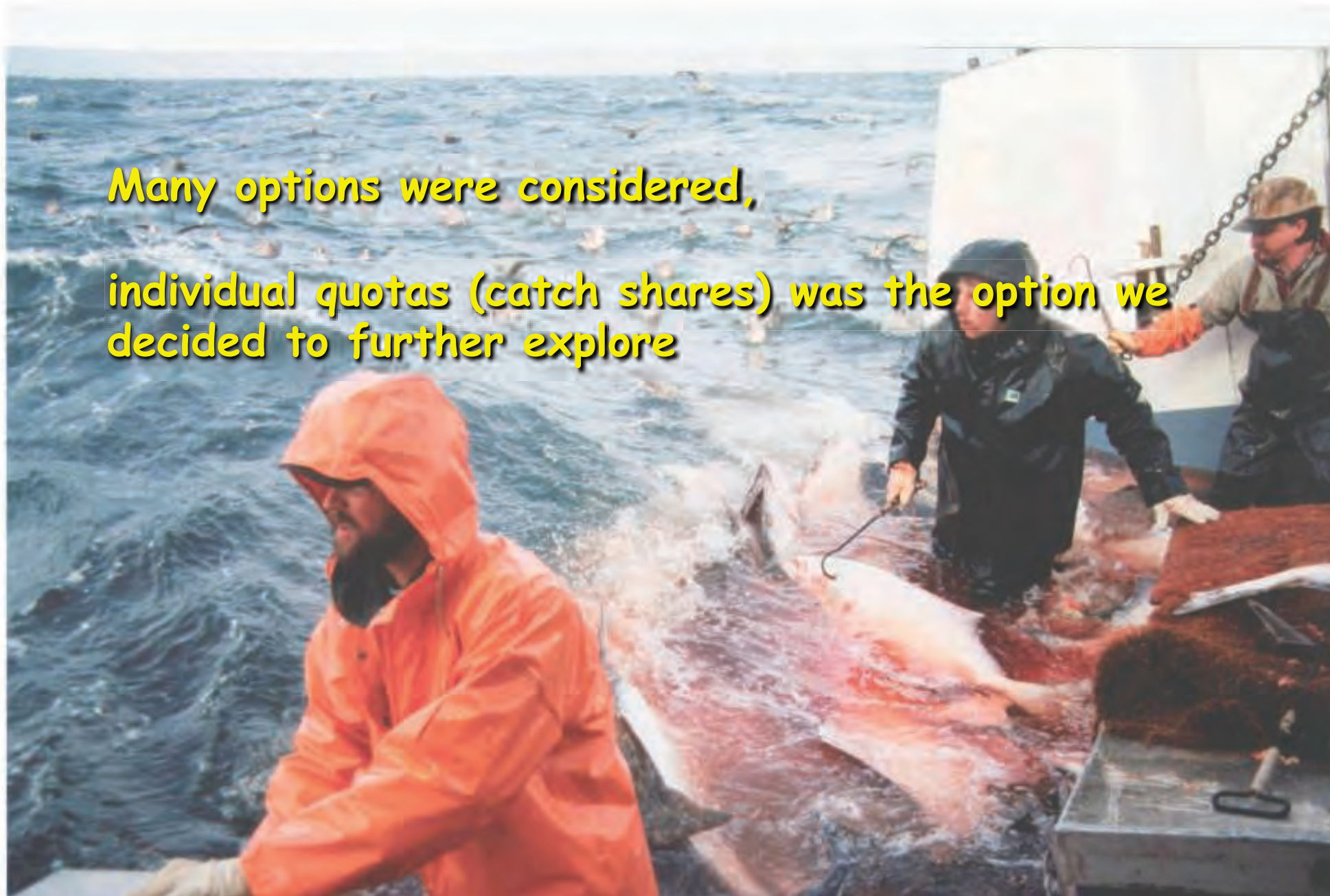
BC's groundfish fisheries extend from Juan de Fuca Strait to Dixon Entrance



In the 1980's, the BC halibut fishery needed to change



Many options were considered,
individual quotas (catch shares) was the option we
decided to further explore



Outcry

- Allocation formula that established IQ
- High Grading
- Job loss
- Rewards cheaters
- Corporate concentration
- Devastate coastal communities
- Privatization of public resource
- Doctors, lawyers and environmental groups would purchase all the quota
- Why should we change? Why not the sport or native sector? (Our behavior is conditional on their behavior)

Halibut fishery moved to an IQ fishery in 1991
and the benefits were numerous and obvious

- Port monitoring
- Hail requirements
- Enforcement

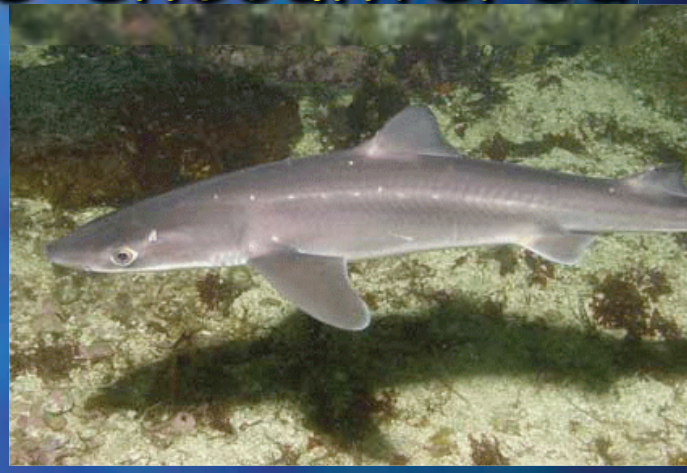
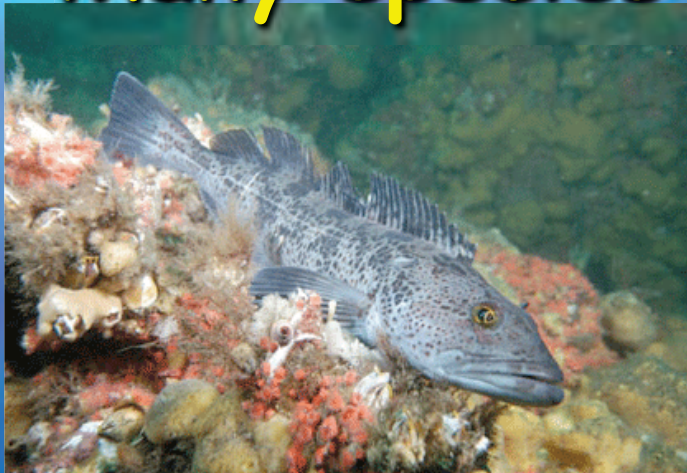
Not one of the fears materialized

For many years we fished happily

But...



Many species are encountered



And this fact did not go unnoticed

IQ's in one fishery was not enough...

- Limited understanding of actual catch, only landings
- Fishermen logbooks incomplete
- Concerns about rockfish populations, unreported catch.
- No data on most non-target species
- Wasteful, one fishery discarding what another fishery was targeting

But we were OK with this, no one seemed to mind



How groundfish integration came to be:

The Conservation of Marine Biological Diversity
and Species Abundance on Canada's West Coast:
Institutional Impediments

Groundfish: A Case Study



A Report by Terry Glavin
for the Sierra Club of British Columbia

- Pressure from ENGOs.
- The public became aware
- We were asked to clean up the fishery

A large fish, possibly a salmon, is being hoisted on the deck of a fishing boat. The fish is suspended by a chain and a rope, hanging vertically over the side of the boat. Two men are visible on the deck, one in the foreground wearing a yellow and orange jacket, and another in the background wearing a grey jacket. The boat's deck is blue, and the sea is visible in the background. The text "This was no easy task" and "And a long story" is overlaid on the image in yellow font.

This was no easy task
And a long story



A processor rep was included in the discussions

7 sectors participated in the process known as the Commercial Industry Caucus

- Halibut
- Sablefish
- Lingcod
- Dogfish
- Trawl
- Rockfish (inside)
- Rockfish (outside)



The task seemed impossible

- No trust
- No chair
- Consensus process
- 7 management plans
- No faith



We met for 2 to 3 days every month for a year and still had not agreed on a chair.

When we reported our progress to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.....

DFO Ultimatum

1. All rockfish catch must be accounted for,
2. Rockfish catches will be managed according to established rockfish management areas,
3. Fishermen will be individually accountable for their catch,
4. New monitoring standards will be established and implemented to meet the above 3 objectives, and,
5. Species of concern will be closely examined and actions such as reduction of total allowable catch (TAC's) and other catch limits will be considered and implemented to be consistent with the precautionary approach for management.

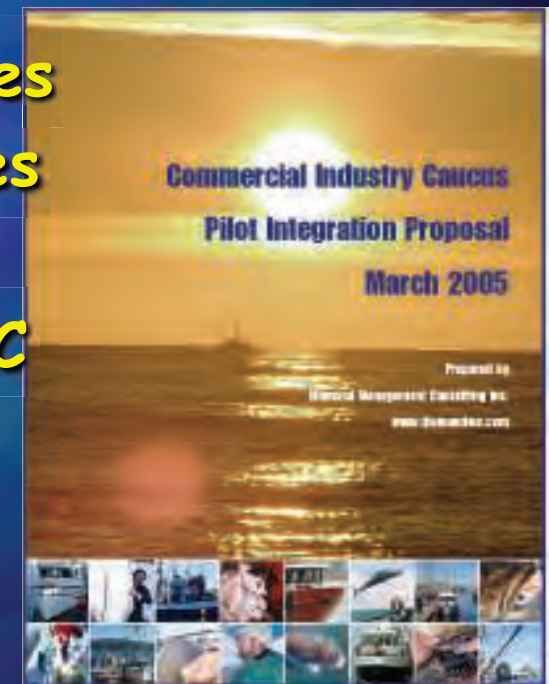
...and if we didn't figure it out...

- 
- Selected an independent professional facilitator
 - Started by developing a mission statement
 - Developed guiding principles
 - Developed a "General Trading Rule"


Then we began negotiating

BC's Integrated Groundfish Fishery

- Pilot Integration April 2006
- 7 license types all with various catches of rockfish and other species needed to combine TACs and become fully accountable.
- Over 60 species to manage
- Up to 5 management areas per species
- Transferable between four gear types
- All sets video taped and audited
- All fleets must meet area-based TAC



INTEGRATED GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

- 1 management plan
 - Catch shares for all species and vessels
 - each vessel accountable for all catch - whether retained or released; targeted or non-targeted
 - Trading of quotas between vessels and fisheries
- 
- 100% dockside and at-sea monitoring (at-sea observers for trawl; EM for H&L and Trap)
 - At-sea data provides information on total catch mortality (retained and released) by species and area

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- To science and the resource

- Staying within sustainable harvest levels based on both landed catch and at-sea release mortality

- Every one of the groundfish stocks was under harvested in 2009

- Fishermen's logbooks are being use in science and management



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

To managers and fishermen:

- Greatly reduced at-sea releases (because the vessel is responsible for associated mortality)
- Greatly reduced illegal fishing activities
- Increased economic returns from the retention and sale of bycatch
- Increased selective fishing practices
- Improved cooperation among fishermen
- Safer fishing practices



MARKET BENEFITS



- Harvesters and processing companies can develop long term business plans

- Harvesters have the flexibility and incentive to improve product quality, consistent supply and better service the needs of the market

- Shorter trips for fresh fish and improved frozen-at-sea products



- Improved chain of custody from point of harvest through to retailer

- Buyers can track fish right back to the vessel

- Better positions Canadian groundfish for future eco-certification such as MSC

Leadership

BC could not have achieved this level of fisheries management without leadership in Industry, government and the public

Important leaders were identified and supported

Conclusions

- In British Columbia, the IQ program removed competition among fishermen
- Able to concentrate on maximizing IQ's potential
- Individual accountability = Individual responsibility (collective responsibility did not work)
- Transferability is essential in combining sectors into a multispecies fishery
- Importance of monitoring
Old behaviors

Conclusions

- We now have ability to retain all species caught and account for all species discarded
- ITQ program can address any issue(s) an Industry or Community wants
- B.C. fishermen now lead by example in conservation
- Catch shares and monitoring can eliminate the illegal fishing activities
- Ownership-Stewardship-Sustainability

Photo courtesy of IPHC

**BC Commercial Groundfish
fishery is accountable,
responsible, sustainable and
can prove it!**



This is the best managed fishery in the world...of course you should buy my fish.