

British Columbia's Groundfish Fisheries:

A Fisherman's Perspective

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Should I buy fish from Wes?



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

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- The British Columbia groundfish fishery has been completely reformed and we want to let you know how this is good for the resource, harvesters, processors, buyers and consumers



Photo courtesy of IPHC



What it was like (1990):

- Six days of fishing
- 435 vessels
- Several millions of pounds landed at once
- Small amount fresh with majority being frozen
- Poor quality
- Low price
- Non-target species discarded





What it was like (cont'd):

- Fishermen lost at sea

- Gear loss
- Ghost fishing
- Lots of low paying short term jobs



What it was like (cont'd):

- Under-harvesting - money and opportunities lost
- Over-harvesting - Conservation and sustainability concerns



Main Motivators

■ Safety



Main Motivators

- Marketing
- Price
- Quality

- Control
- Conservation

Photo courtesy of IPHC

Options Considered

- Do nothing (let government decide)
- Gear restrictions
- Catch restrictions (trip limits)
- Area licensing
- Time and area restrictions
- Vessel restrictions
- Government funded buy-back program
- Individual Quota (IQ) program

Outcry

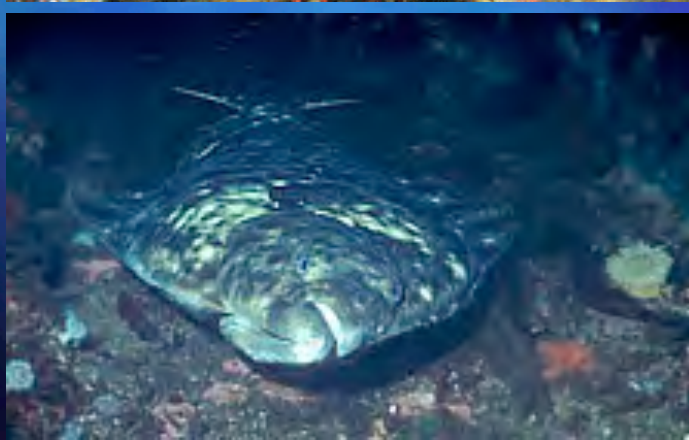
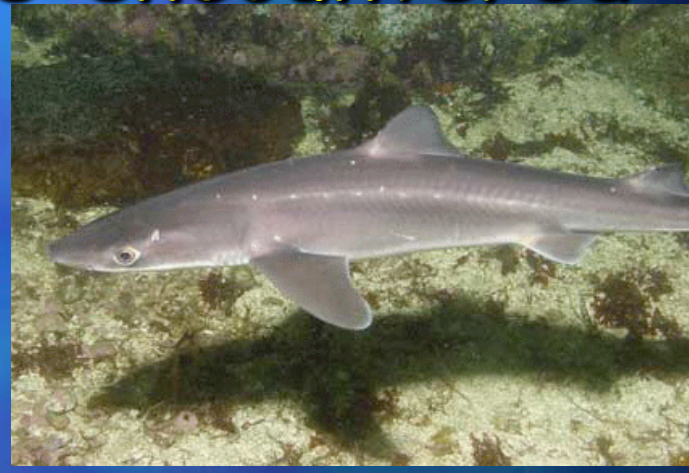
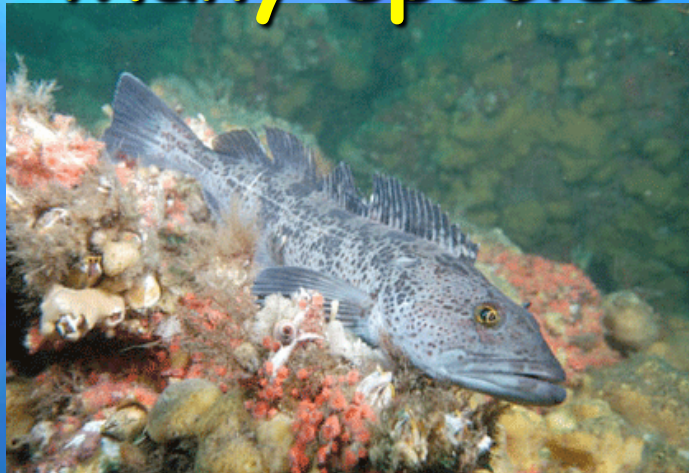
- Allocation formula that established IQ
- High Grading
- Job loss
- Rewards cheaters
- Corporate concentration
- Devastate coastal communities
- Privatization of public resource
- Doctors, lawyers and environmental groups would purchase all the quota
- Why should we change? Why not the sport or native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

Halibut fishery moved to an IQ fishery in 1991
and the benefits were numerous and obvious
Not one of the fears materialized

But...



Many species are encountered



IQ's in one fishery were 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 license type discarding what another license was targeting



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, public, industry (inefficient, wasteful)

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.



This was no easy task

And a whole other story


The outcome of a 3 year advisory
process (CIC) was...

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 GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT

- 1 management plan
 - individual vessel quotas 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

[illegible]

Logbooks are audited against video footage

Sounds expensive?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- The groundfish management initiatives have resulted in significant improvements, including:
 - Staying within sustainable harvest levels based on both landed catch and at-sea release mortality
 - Every one of the groundfish stocks was underharvested in 2008
 - Fishermen's logbooks are being use in science and management



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Greatly reduced at-sea releases (because the vessel is responsible for associated mortality)
- 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 B.C. IQ program removed competition among fishermen
- Able to concentrate on maximizing IQ's potential
- Individual accountability = Individual responsibility (collective responsibility did not work)
- Have top quality groundfish available 12 months of the year
- Importance of monitoring
 - honest reporting

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
- Ownership-Stewardship-Sustainability

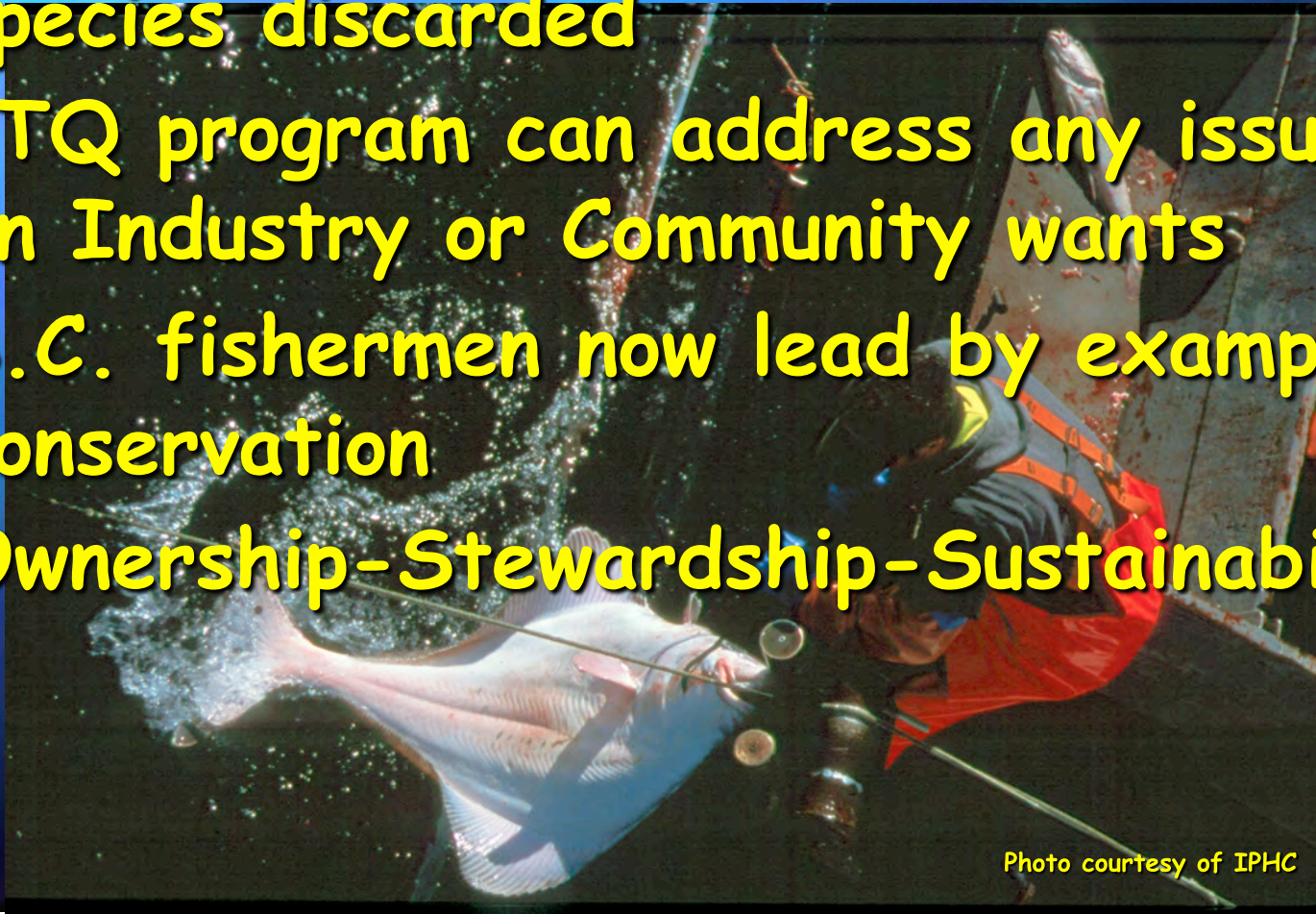


Photo courtesy of IPHC

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

Photo courtesy of IPHC

Salmon story

Salmon fishery did not go to an IQ fishery Instead:

- Government funded license buyback (retired dormant licenses)
- Gear restrictions
- Time and area restrictions
- Area licensing
- Bycatch reduction incentives
- Retraining programs
- Government issued coloured pamphlets and videos

Salmon story cont'd

Created a culture of dependence and entitlement

What was once a great fishery is now an occasional part time job

Every downturn in the commercial salmon fishery led to growth in salmon aquaculture

