

CCIRA



The Common Voice

CCIRA Newsletter

October 2013

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Inside this issue

The Central Coast Commercial Fisheries Association: Sharing Wealth Through Collaboration.....	2
Eight Things You Should Know About PNCIMA.....	4
Why MaPP Matters to Our Nations.....	6
Saving Eulachon.....	8
About This Newsletter.....	12
Your CCIRA Community Marine Use Planning Coordinators.....	12
Your CCIRA Staff.....	12
How to Get Involved.....	12

Central
Coast
Indigenous
Resource
Alliance

The Central Coast Commercial Fisheries Association: Sharing Wealth Through Collaboration

Things are starting to look different at Bella Bella’s fish plant. After re-opening in 2012 from an eight-year closure, the plant is now employing 120 people throughout the summer months. And this year, with the collective license holdings of the four Nations, the plant hopes to receive as many as 1.4 million pounds of urchins harvested by our community members. When combined with existing salmon and sea cucumber processing, the new urchin work may let the plant keep 30 people employed year round.

“In a community that often has more than 60% unemployment, providing 30 households with year-round income makes a really big difference,” says Christy Whitmore, the general manager of the plant. “And those differences reach beyond economics. In our community, drinking and social problems decline significantly when people have work. It makes a big contribution to our community’s health.”

Christy tells stories of people quitting drinking and of families reuniting when people are working. “These stories are what keeps me going,” she says. “If I only looked at the books it would be a different story. But, in a small community you have to look differently at what success is.”

This success did not happen overnight. It is the result of deliberate work and planning by the Central Coast Commercial Fisheries Association (CCCFA), a shared business venture between all four of our Nations. Working together through the CCCFA, our Nations have gained access to \$8.5 million of quota, training and licences (including urchin, halibut, black cod, geoduck, herring and prawn). The Nations have agreed to split quotas and licences evenly between our four Nations, and are currently working together to increase processing opportunities for the Bella Bella fish plant.

“We wouldn’t have all those urchins, and could not hire as many people, if not for the CCCFA,” says Christy. She also explains that having an operational fish plant in Bella Bella creates benefits that reach beyond Heiltsuk territory. “We process Wuikinuxv halibut and give them a better price than if they took it to market in Port Hardy. We also process Chum for the Nuxalk for 15 cents above market price. We need to be competitive, but we’ll pay whatever it takes to get the fish here. If we give the Wuikinuxv 15-20 cents more for their fish and we get to put people to work, it is a win-win situation.”



Left to right: Glen Clellamin, Russ John and Jeff Windsor showing off their new commercial diving certifications.

Christy emphasizes that jobs at the plant are not only for the Heiltsuk. The plant is willing to employ people from any of our Nations if they can find accommodation in Bella Bella.

Gary Wilson works for the Heiltsuk Economic Development Corporation and is also a CCCFA board member. Like Christy, he believes that collaboration between our Nations is creating benefits for all of us. “Working together through the CCCFA gives our Nations the ability to take advantage of opportunities, rather than trying to compete with one another on things like quota,” he says. “It is often too expensive to access resources as an individual community...despite the challenges we’ve created new opportunities by working together.”

Recently, four people from our communities have passed their commercial SCUBA certification and three more passed their commercial Surface Supply Dive course with

funding from the CCCFA and administration support from CCIRA. Supporting this intensive training is one way that the CCCFA and CCIRA are helping build the capacity among our youth to work in commercial fisheries like urchin harvesting. Last year the CCCFA managed to put 27 people to work fishing. This year, by utilizing our 10 urchin licenses, our communities hope to see an additional five boats fishing, employing up to 15 people, including divers, tenders and skippers.

The Heiltsuk’s Jeff Windsor and Nuxalk’s Glen Clellamin are two of the newly trained divers who are happy to see the Nations working together on this initiative. “I think it is the best thing that could happen,” says Jeff, “because you’re creating jobs for numerous people and we’re all going to be one big family.” Glen shares his enthusiasm. “The real cool thing is that I’m sitting here with other Nations. I think it is really important that we can see eye to eye and do this together. It is about time.”



“We wouldn’t have all those urchins, and could not hire as many people, if not for the CCCFA.” Christy Whitmore, General Manager, Bella Bella Fish Plant



The Heiltsuk fish plant is helping to create prosperity for all four of our Nations.

Eight Things You Should Know About PNCIMA

1. The Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area (PNCIMA) is a marine planning process that began in 2010.

2. PNCIMA includes a Government-to-Government (G2G2G) agreement between First Nations and the provincial and federal governments. It also includes consultation with scientists, fishermen, tourism outfitters, environmentalists, transportation suppliers, the logging industry and others.

3. Using an ecosystem-based management (EBM) framework, the goal of this process is to develop a comprehensive plan to conserve the north coast's resources while fostering sustainable economies in coastal communities.

4. Recognizing that PNCIMA was an excellent opportunity to implement our Nation-level Marine Use Plans, our Nations worked hard to help facilitate this work.

5. In September 2011, the DFO withdrew from a funding agreement for PNCIMA, which greatly reduced the scale of the process and its potential to meet First Nations' needs.

6. In June 2013, a draft PNCIMA plan was released for public review. Implementation of the completed PNCIMA plan is expected to improve coordination for marine management, enhance the sustainability
- of marine resource use and contribute to a national network of marine protected areas (MPA's).

7. DFO's reduced involvement left some gaps in the PNCIMA process. To address these outstanding issues First Nations have:

I. Created the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP) between the Province and First Nations, and

II. Signed a Letter of Intent with DFO, which will lead to greater First Nations involvement with respect to commercial fisheries access, fisheries management, and marine protected areas development and management.

8. First Nations are now driving the work plans within MaPP and the Letter of Intent with DFO. By working with these two new entities, we hope to accomplish everything we had planned to achieve within the original PNCIMA process before it was scaled back.

To learn more about our involvement in MaPP, please see page six.



A working boat returning to the harbour, Heiltsuk territory



Wuikinuxv's Robert Shaw geared up for a Surface Supply dive. Photo credit Ryan Miller, DIVESAFE International.

Why MaPP Matters to Our Nations

What is MaPP?

The Marine Planning Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (MaPP) is a planning process for coastal and marine areas that will create healthier oceans and communities. It involves 20 First Nations in four sub-regions of B.C. These regions are the Central Coast, Haida Gwaii, North Coast, and North Vancouver Island.

Who is leading the MaPP process?

MaPP is a Government-to-Government (G2G) planning process. First Nations are co-leading this work with the provincial government.

What is the intent of MaPP?

Using traditional knowledge and science, the MaPP process will create new coastal and marine plans that are specific to each sub-region. Implementing these plans will enhance the health of our marine environment and our culture, while creating sustainable economies in our communities.

“The MaPP planning process is ground breaking on a number of fronts...First Nations are leading a process that will become a model for oceans management worldwide”

Aaron Heidt, CCIRA Marine Planner/Policy Analyst

Does the MaPP process mean our own Marine Use Plans were a waste of time?

No! Our marine use plans are critical to informing MaPP. Our plans are the result of thorough community consultation; they are informed by traditional knowledge and science and reflect the traditional laws, values and interests of our Nations. MaPP is an excellent opportunity to implement many key elements of our marine use plans.

How is MaPP different than how things were done in the past?

The culture and economies of our Nations rely on a healthy environment. To this end, MaPP is using an Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) model. This holistic approach works to balance ecological and human needs, and considers more than just commercially viable species. It is very similar to the way First Nations traditionally managed marine resources; EBM will help ensure that our oceans remain healthy, which is critical to our way of life.

What else can our Nations hope to gain by engaging in MaPP?

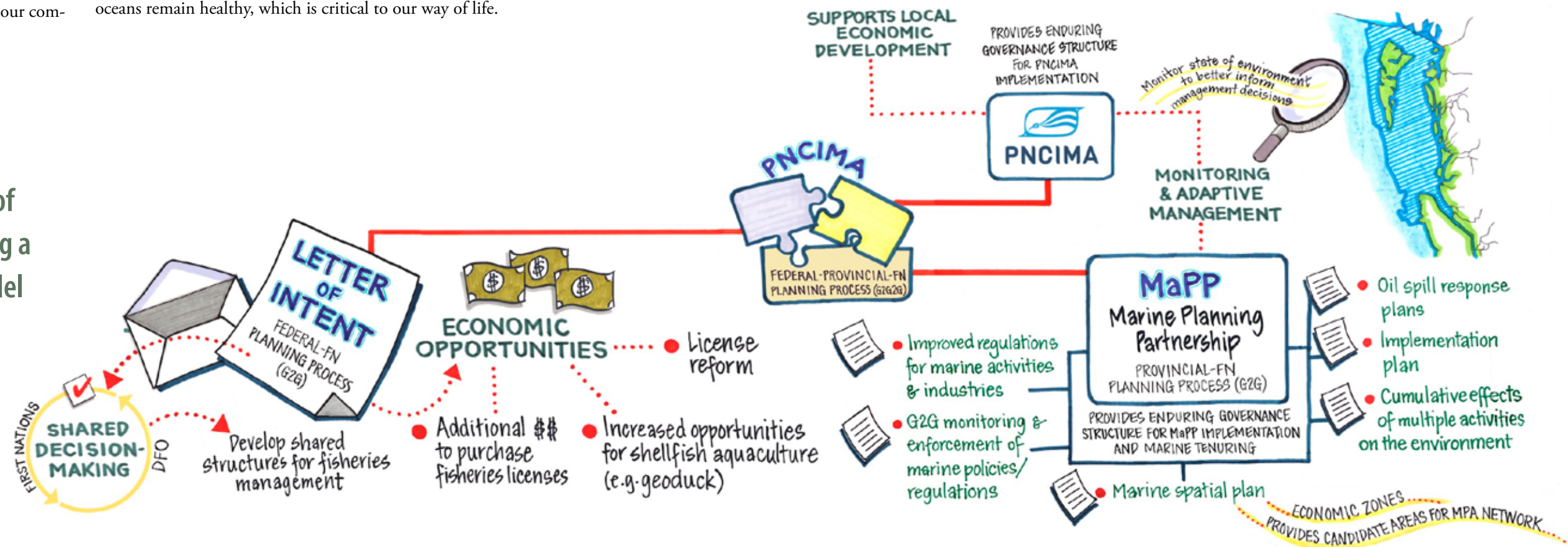
Above all, MaPP will improve the health of our oceans, help create local employment, improve marine use regulations, and lead to better monitoring and enforcement in our waters. Through spatial planning, MaPP will reduce conflict between user groups and enhance economic opportunities such as shellfish aquaculture. MaPP will also recommend marine protected zones where commercial activities are re-

stricted. These protection zones will also provide improved opportunities for traditional harvesting without competition from commercial and recreational fisheries.

It will take a lot of work to get there, but we hope to achieve these and other goals through MaPP in the coming years. Importantly, as co-leaders of the MaPP process, we will have direct input into these initiatives, ensuring that our interests are reflected in the MaPP plan.



A Partial Overview of the Marine Planning Process



Saving Eulachon

It is hard to overstate the importance of eulachon to Central Coast First Nations. For millennia our people have worked together each spring to harvest this critical resource, whose grease has sustained us nutritionally and has been a valuable trade commodity and medicine.

The Nuxalk Nation's Megan Moody knows a lot about this special fish. As a child she fished for eulachon with her family and watched families make eulachon grease. Later on, she earned a Master of Science degree from the University of British Columbia for her research on eulachon. Today, she works as the Stewardship Director for the Nuxalk Nation.

Part of Megan's Masters research included interviewing people in her community. "There were some years," An-finn Siwallace told her, "they [eulachon] were so plentiful that you could just go down and handfish them off the side of the river bank. Just walk down and grab them and put them in your bucket."

Now, eulachon have become so scarce that none of the 25 rivers traditionally fished in the Central Coast have supported a harvest in 15 years - even longer in Wuikinuxv territory. "Our elders say it's like we're lost in the springtime," says Megan. "People were usually happy in the spring and looked forward to the harvest. Now we watch and wait for the fish to return and nothing happens. Many of our youth don't even know what an eulachon looks like anymore." Not only are we at risk of losing a very nutritious food, but we also risk losing part of our culture and the history that ties us to our ancestors.

Rather than standby and watch this valuable resource vanish, we have been doing our own eulachon research, and monitoring the abundance of our stocks. These studies are centered in the Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv territories where the rivers once supported the largest runs. Megan advises both Nations on their research efforts, which combine traditional knowledge with science. Slowly, this work is pro-

viding critical information on the size of the stocks and giving us clues into things like the location and timing of spawning events.

With technical support from CCIRA, the Kitasoo/Xai'Xais and Heiltsuk Nations will also conduct monitoring activities in their territories next year to determine if eulachon are returning to their rivers. This collaborative research may help uncover why the eulachon are not returning to Central Coast rivers in significant numbers.

By combining traditional knowledge of the Nations with our ongoing scientific research we have become local experts on Central Coast eulachon stocks. "It is the Nations coast-wide that are leading the research to find out what is happening to eulachon," says Megan, noting that the research is being conducted entirely by community members. "If it wasn't for our research," she says, "we wouldn't know if eulachon still exist in our rivers."

The plight of the eulachon prompted the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to assess eulachon in the area from Haisla territory down to Kingcome Inlet as endangered. However, this large area contains many different eulachon stocks. Some, such as in the Bella Coola River, are depleted but others, like the Kingcome River stocks, are still healthy enough to support a harvest.

Despite COSEWIC's assessment, the federal government has not yet officially listed eulachon as an endangered species. But if that happens, harvest restrictions will be imposed on all rivers in our area regardless of the health of the local eulachon stocks.

More concerning, these restrictions will continue even if the stocks recover, since the process to de-list a species is very slow. These assessments were done with little consultation with our Nations despite our vast knowledge of eulachon

Continued on page 10 >



Felicity Walkus, a deceased Nuxalk elder, putting eulachon on sticks, Nuxalk Nutrition Project 1985.

"It's... a lost segment of our society so to speak...because there's a big gap there now. What do you do in the springtime? What do you do before winter ends? [White] people like to watch for the groundhog but our people used to get ready to make eulachon grease."

Nuxalk fisher

Continued from page 9, Saving Eulachon.

and the potential impacts on our culture. Imposing harvest restrictions on our Nations would also fail to recognize our long history of sustainable eulachon management.

To ensure that we have a voice in this discussion, CCIRA is gathering Traditional Knowledge (TK) and creating conservation plans for eulachon that incorporate our interests and TK, while asserting our right to manage fish as we have for generations. “We need a plan in place for how we will continue to protect eulachon and then manage them when the populations rebound,” says Megan.

As with the Marine Use Plans already created (See page 4-5 in Newsletter 1), each community will work towards

creating an eulachon conservation plan specific to the community. Once completed, the eulachon sub-committee will help to combine this work into a harmonized conservation plan that will guide management of eulachon across the Central Coast.

In the past, ‘eulachon time’ was an occasion when grandparents, parents and children all gathered together, strengthening important social ties and affirming our cultural identity. This was the time when the younger generations would learn through hands-on experience how to make eulachon grease. With CCIRA’s help, our Nations are working together in hope that ‘eulachon time’ will return to the Central Coast once again.



Nuxalk’s eulachon technician, Troy Anderson, searching through a river plankton sample for eulachon eggs and larvae.



Live eulachon caught and released in Nuxalk territory during this year’s research project.

CCIRA



About This Newsletter

CCIRA was created by our Nations to build upon the successes realized through working together to develop and implement our Nation-level marine use plans. Today, CCIRA is involved in a wide array of projects and initiatives across the central coast. *The Common Voice* is one source of information about CCIRA's activities in our communities. Every couple of months a new issue will highlight specific projects that are underway across the central coast with updates on issues and policies that CCIRA is working on. *The Common Voice* is distributed to all central coast First Nations and is one way we are working to ensure that our communities stay connected with each other. For more information about CCIRA and what we do, please visit our website www.ccira.ca, or contact us at info@ccira.ca

Your CCIRA Community Marine Use Planning Coordinators

Danielle Shaw and Frank Hanuse – Wuikinuxv

Wilfred Dawson – Nuxalk

Whitney Sadowsky – Kitasoo/Xai'Xais

Julie Carpenter – Heiltsuk

Your CCIRA Staff

Ken Cripps – Program Director/Biologist

Gord McGee – Projects Manager

Morgan Hocking – Science Coordinator

Aaron Heidt – Marine Planner/Policy Analyst

Cindy Hanuse – Administrator

Megan Moody has recently left CCIRA to pursue an exciting new opportunity as the Stewardship Director for the Nuxalk Nation. CCIRA would like to thank Megan for her significant contribution to the creation of our organization and the development of many of CCIRA's key projects. We look forward to working closely with her in her new capacity.

How to Get Involved

- » Visit your Community Coordinator or Resource Stewardship Office and ask about your Nation's marine use plan.
- » Attend local marine use planning open houses and community meetings.
- » Take advantage of training and employment opportunities.

Thank you and photo credits

Special thank you to the photographers. Photos taken by: Ian McAllister, Cindy Hanuse, Ryan Miller, DIVESAFE international, Tim Irvin, Megan Moody, Julie Carpenter, Nuxalk Nutrition Project and Nuxalk Fisheries.

Impact statement

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