DFO Aquaculture Communications Overview 2008-07-07

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Introduction

The Government of Canada, through its new initiative **Aquaculture 2012**, is looking to strengthen public confidence, increase transparency and build strategic inter-jurisdictional partnerships across the country as it relates to Canada's aquaculture industry.

As part of this commitment, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is looking at developing a new, proactive communications approach towards aquaculture and its positioning with stakeholders.

Mike Randall Communications was hired to conduct a series of interviews across the country with key industry stakeholders and to develop an overarching approach, including specific tactics that will serve as a blueprint for action regarding aquaculture communications across the country.

Overview

It is clear that there is no general consensus on the state of the aquaculture industry in Canada.

Depending on the role within the department or the region the employee works in there is a wide variance of opinions as to what DFO's role related to aquaculture is, should be and where the industry is going.

What the national review has clearly demonstrated is;

1) There is a significant need for increased employee/stakeholder communications within DFO surrounding aquaculture.
2) A National approach to aquaculture will only work in certain circumstances while in others a region approach would be more successful
3) A very large component to the work needed surrounding aquaculture communications is grounded in a stakeholder relations exercise.
4) The core key stakeholder group for aquaculture in Canada includes;
    - DFO Employees
    - Other Federal departments
    - Provincial Government
    - Industry
    - Environmental NGO's
    - Traditional Fishery
    - Retailers
    - Consumers
    - Land Owners
    - General Public

Next Steps

As part of the final communications approach/strategy

1) Develop an **employee/internal communications** approach for within DFO that will be lead by the sector and supported by communications. This will include;
    i. Clearer communications on the role and mandate of DFO for aquaculture in Canada
    ii. Clearer definition, through enhanced communications, between regulatory and development

2) Develop a stakeholder communications approach (including media tactics where applicable) for;
    a. Industry
        i. Including how to communicate and partner in communications
        ii. Ways to promote the industry taking action on the communications front on their own
        iii. Thoughts on the use of science in communications and how and what in science needs to be positioned as part of the overall communications
    b. Provincial counterparts
        i. Including who is responsible for what in terms of public communications
        ii. Ways to partner in communications and how to communicate individual roles and responsibilities
    c. Environmental NGOs
        i. Including tactics on how to communicate and engage
        ii. Also tactics on how to refute inaccurate claims and accusations
    d. Retailers
        i. Including key communication opportunities to educate
3) Develop tactics to better communicate the facts about Aquaculture in Canada
4) A separate strategy is being developed to address the BC related Sea Lice issue

The following is an overview of the discussions that have taken place. For purposes of reporting we have divided the report into feedback by region. We have highlighted some interesting comments for your review.

Pacific Region

Sr. Management

Aquaculture has very little social license and it continues to decline

The national danger of communicating the rigour on the west coast is that it may put the east coast (with less rigour) at risk

We have never spent time trying to communicate government's role

We are not the managers of the aquaculture fishery. Our principal role is the protection of wild salmon and the fish habitat.

No one believes the sustainable development message we are trying to communicate on the west coast (including staff)

Fin Fish aquaculture will not expand in BC.

We have a very complex regulatory environment and very few people understand it. Public doesn't care which government body is responsible for what.

We need to stop using the message "Sustainable blah blah blah"

People are comfortable with shell fish aquaculture which is part of the culture of the west coast. Seen as the environmentally friendly form of aquaculture. But it's very difficult to make money.

We need to use shellfish aquaculture as a gateway for first nations into aquaculture.

If we could get first nations to support aquaculture it would take the wind out of the NGOs sails

There is no short-term fix

Being proactive depends on how we do it. People don t believe government. We need to stop being advocates and start being real

CAAR is the most reasonable organization to work with one on one. It's the subset that broke off that includes;

Alexandra Morton/Save our Salmon

MOU Renewal – need to take the time to explain it to the people

We can't win in duelling science

We have a great story as it relates to the Brighton Archipelago.

"WE understand the Brighten in a profound way. We need to use science to show what we know and use it as a basis for what we recommend."

This is a multi-stakeholder process to move people to seeing aquaculture in a balanced way.

This is a growing industry with strong support in coastal communities.

The public has very little knowledge of the industry

There is much greater public awareness of aquaculture on the west coast

The West Coast is unique in terms of the number of NGOs. They are committed to preserving our natural environment.

The aquaculture industry came in quickly and hasn't enjoyed the luxury of time to be accepted.

Resource extraction is the key source of the debate – especially in urban centers. Farmed fish is not particularly desirable.

There are a lot of stakeholders on the west coast including

Independent scientists
Academics
Restaurateurs
First nations
ENGOs
General Public

This issue has legs

There is a real opportunity to grow in production through partnering with 1st Nations

Opportunity with closed container technology

More remote parts of BC is involved in ocean ranching. Get's little media attention.

Within DFO there is an imbalance. A whole bunch of people on wild commercial fishery. We need to strike a better balance.

Communications is like the rest of DFO – spends more time communicating about regular commercial fishery than aquaculture.

Facts don't matter – people have made up their minds that Salmon Farming is bad.

Constant onslaught of media. The infamous science report that wild salmon is becoming extinct.

We are constantly reacting

We need a really good strategy. We need to know what kind of effort will be needed to do the right things. We also need to better engage 3rd party on issues.

There are 2 fronts we need to focus on;

1) Expansion - we need to create a climate whereby the province will approve expansion
2) Education – DFO need to describe the program accurately. This is an image problem for the department based on misinformation

We need to focus on other environmental factors at play (climate change, global warming, food etc) would serve the department well.

There is a lack of consistency with DFO's legislative mandate and the way we operate. It's about a balance and tough political decisions.

We often act on the assumption that scientists are the most credible but when you get into the debate it's difficult for our scientists to translate their views. By using scientists we continue to promote the controversy over science.

The decisions need to be underpinned by science.

We need to better understand our rationale for doing this.

We're dealing with different levels of industry player.

Marine Harvest – the Gold Standard
Mainstream –don't see why they need to get involved.

We need to take a proactive approach – very much seen today as being reactive.

Politically aquaculture is not a winner.

We need to work with the province.

We need much more emphasis on communities and stakeholders.

Pacific Science

This is a struggling industry with enormous potential.

We are losing the communications battle

We seem ill-equipped to keep up with the Public onslaught and to meet where public opinion is going.

There is a disparity on the part of the companies to buying in to the appearance of sustainability.

The industry is suffering

The shellfish industry consists of small operations that are competing with the labour market. Shellfish is a tough investment. Changes coming in CSSPI Protocol are going to hit the shellfish guys in a difficult way.

The regulatory framework for DFO is not well understood.

BC Has among the highest standards in the world.

Pre Sea Lice - escapes was the big issue. We only had 16 in 2007.

We actually resell BC nets elsewhere in the world

The relationship with the industry is up and down.

Look at the opportunity on closed containment. We are not convinced

We need to situate aquaculture into all other human activity on the water on their relative impact. – The Commercial fisheries kill wild salmon but people accept that because of the accepted controls in place.

We need to convince people that the right mitigation measures are in place.

Aquaculture is a blight on the scenery and the BC notion of the pristine environment

We have not communicated the change in technology, the impacts of climate change. ENGO's have targeted aquaculture today like they did forestry and offshore drilling a number of years ago.

Invasive species not a big issue on the west coast - they are a big issue on the east coast.

We need to communicate the message that we need to feed people and we can't do it on the commercial fishery.

When it comes to communicating science we need to be a little careful. The whole notion of "peer reviewed" science backfired on DFO. Some claim that science has sold out to government.

Science has not been able or allowed to be proactive.

Holding scientific technical briefings has been a good way to build relationships and to build some knowledge with the media.

BC Stands out to the rest of the world. Safeway and Wal-Mart campaigns throughout the US influences businesses and people around the world.

As long as the BC government is seen as waffling it will be more important for DFO to get the objective story out.

We could learn more from Norway who is the poster child for sustainable aquaculture practices

There is an attitude in BC that "You've screwed up the east coast (cod) and now you re doing it to the west coast."

First Nations is a big factor in BC. While we see some first nations who have embraced aquaculture others say they have caved.

It's because we mismanaged the wild fishery that we have to defend our actions.

Science is here to provide data for decision making. Our problem is that industry is not coming to the table and then it creates the appearance that they have something to hide.

DFO has to be perceived as an objective regulator of the industry and its impacts.

Many see the government as being in bed with the industry and promoting without due regard to concerns.

What is needed

- We need less negative coverage in the media

- We need a West Coast aquatic management board
- The strategy will be successful when mainstream media stops accepting a new NGO environment story without a critical/objective eye.
- We need to showcase the changes we've made and that we have learned our lessons.
- We need stronger stakeholder relations with all stakeholders
- We need to engage in dialogue with the ENGOs to show we're taking steps to address concerns
- We need to create a national forum to bring people together

- We are currently very reactive with our communications. We need to be much more proactive with;

    - Science
    - More national in scope
    - Broad dialogue with stakeholders
    - Need to be more active internationally
    - Need to talking throughout the seafood value chain
        - Retailers
        - Chefs

- First we need to get our own house in order
- We need to better understand the NGO landscape and we need to be much more strategic on how we work with them.
- We need to look at certification

Proposed Messaging

Healthy Seafood derived from the pristine Pacific Ocean.

National Headquarters

MINO

Aquaculture is the most exciting economic marine activity happening today.

It has transformed the economies of other countries and has that potential in Canada.

Canada has become a global player in this industry. But started out poorly without a lot of vision.

The communications challenge is two-fold. There are a lot of departments involved and

"How do you deal with the concept of a Zero footprint from tree huggers and still grow the industry."

Feds can't help the industry solve the domestic issue

Government got out of the chute wrong on closed containment.

We have allowed a too fine a microscope on the issue.

Our lack of policy renders us to a position of very little to say. Nothing proactive to say.

The lines have been drawn in the sand and they are virtually the same as they were in 2003.

There is a real appetite to be proactive on the communications front. We need to help the media people understand.

There's a whole new great story on Cod Aquaculture on the east coast.

We need to show the government is trying to do something. The success on the east coast can help the west coast. We can show good news on aquaculture.

The east coast where we were off the mark – we've worked with all stakeholders to get back on. Now we have much better engagement with the communities.

We haven't tried to win the battle on communications like we did with the seal hunt because there is no corporate will with the bureaucracy of DFO to win the battle. From a political perspective we are ready and there is that will.

Science is one part of the equation but not the only part.

We need to look at the role science has played in other countries like Ireland, Norway, Scotland and South America. There they have a balanced approach. In Canada we have duelling scientists.

It's the responsibility of the feds to bring the scientists together.

Aquaculture Management

In terms of communications around aquaculture – DFO has not done much. The web site is a very passive approach of supply not serve. This doesn't proactively push the message.

It's surprising how much emphasis people put on the web site and what is doesn't say.

We need to adopt a proactive, assertive outreach approach.

We need to develop strategy and tools.

One of the major targets needs to be buyers that make purchasing decisions.

The idea of CSR needs to be communicated with all stakeholders and the fact we are moving to greater sustainability efforts.

There is a division in this country from the Rockies East and the Rockies West.

The BC NGOs are kicking our ass. They've become rock stars.

We have not succeeded in getting our message across to the people.

We're now in a position where we can't meet the demand for product and we need to change public opinion to grow the market.

Marketing is not our role.

The challenge the province has is that they find it difficult to support the industry and it has caused a split between urban and rural BC. There is a willingness on the part of the Province to make more positive statements if they could tap into a more positive public.

The industry has become a half billion dollar industry by accident.

DFO must promote the sustainable development of the industry.

The pendulum in DFO has swung too far to habitat protection. We used to comfortable with sustainable development.

It's a result of the commercial fishery mandate having swung too far towards production as opposed to protection. We need to find a balance.

The majority of the marketing role belongs to industry but there is a role for government to help industry help itself.

Science/Habitat

The industry has a lot of potential but lacks a certain maturity. Oil and gas speak from one boardroom and the logging industry is well organized.

The aquaculture industry is a mess – with conflicting demands and a protectionists attitude.

West Coast companies are not from here. We have one that refuses to provide information.

It's been the same shit for 5 years. The industry is not well organized and not structured.

The majority of people just buy salmon – they don't know about the issue.

The idea of food security is an issue for a very small segment of the population.

Some say we need to promote the products and organize the industry – well what's the role of the industry.

Aquaculture needs an international association.

We need to ask ourselves some questions;
- What is it we are trying to do?
- Should we hit the retailers directly?

We need a symposium (with all companies/agencies)

We need an international players meeting

We need to clean up our scientific process so we can better communicate.

Very few people care about the sea lice issue.

NGO's are not grounded in science. If there is a link to sea lice – what proportion? What else is causing it?

We have seen downturns before the sea lice issue

We need a campaign – seafood is good for your health, need to consume more. Farmed Salmon is good. Also farmed Salmon is clean and koshered and you should eat it.

Our messaging needs to be bullet proof scientifically. Make sure the message is real so we can shout them

Key Messages – Clean and Right

Aquaculture industry has lost sight of the overall universe

Science will not make NGOs win.

It's the role of government to help the industry structure itself. While we are doing that we have to be careful not to promote the industry as that would be environmentally hazardous.

We need a real eco-system view – not just sub-species - Where do humans fit into the equation?

Science

The aquaculture industry is diverse;

- Geographically
- Species

When we talk about aquaculture it's primarily Salmon.

The industry is not very well organized. Not mature. No Cohesiveness in dealing with issues

The industry would be the first to admit they have challenges.

In the west, the industry doesn't represent themselves well in correcting inaccurate information - like sea lice.

On the east coast they have environmental issues but the level of scrutiny is not as high.

We need to talk about food security and food sustainability as it is continuing to become a global issue. In terms of food security, farmed fish is one of the most sustainable ways to get one of the world's best protein sources.

The industry is partly challenged getting beyond reactive – we need to determine whose role it is to talk about these broader issues.

The NGOs won't engage in the broader debate – they are only interested in protecting wild salmon.

Sea Lice is the issue de jour that keeps the funding to NGOs flowing in the door.

All of the NGOs are linked to a number of groups in the US.

Look at the cultural differences in Asia

- They are huge seafood eaters
- The is a cultural importance for this source of protein
- Growing fish is linked to societal acceptance and wealth.

DFO has a sustainable development mandate.

- Sustainable – we have responsibility to ensure the industry is well regulated
- Development – we need to create the conditions that allow industries to grow in an ecologically smart way

Science is there to support management decisions. It's just one piece of the puzzle.

We can't forget societal, political and economic factors as well. The socio-economic factors need more attention.

Today there is very little evidence that sea lice is impacting wild fish populations. We need to get people reporting on what's factual.

The idea of a peer review meeting is a process that has a lot of credibility.

The problem with industry's attitude is – "if there's no problem why do we need a solution?"

We know that 70 to 80% of juvenile salmon die within a matter of months. This happens to all juvenile fish. It's part of the natural mortality. It happens for a variety of reasons and is just part of the broader ecosystem.

DFO has been doing a lot more for the last 2 to 3 years. Our web site provides a lot of information. We are open and transparent. All of this helps with correspondence with the general public.

We need to develop different approached on how we approach the general public to gain greater public understanding then acceptance.

Our key audiences include

ENGOs
Governments
Consumers
General Public

Roles:

Province is responsible for leases and regulatory
The industry is responsible for marketing the product and promoting the industry

The feds are responsible for the broader context of regulation and health and safety benefits.

Aquaculture Management

We are not rising to the occasion to meet the demand as it relates to governance and the regulatory framework. We need to work better to allow the industry to meet the growing demand.

There are clearly structural issues with the way aquaculture is managed within DFO

The public context is that some people are agnostic in terms of vocal opposition to aquaculture but there are more who haven't formed an opinion one way or another however they are one or 2 ENGO communication reports away from changing their minds.

We need to get out the message that farmed salmon is sustainable, good for you and you should eat more of it.

The challenges transcend national boundaries. We are dealing with well funded, sophisticated ENGOs which makes for a powerful combo.

We need to ask ourselves;
- what can we do to influence opinions?
- Who do we need to be working with?

We need to try and provide leadership as part of a broader strategy.

DFO's role has shifted. We have moved from being all about conservation to broader acceptance to pursue the mandate of sustainable development. That was helped by a change in the deputy.

Internal DFO Communications is critical to the success of aquaculture and it has been overlooked.

It will require a cultural shift within the department and that takes time. The Aquaculture Policy Framework has not really been implemented because that cultural shift hasn't taken place.

If we're going to affect change it's not about communicating out it's about communicating in. As a department we are much better positioned to communicate externally.

As it relates to our role with the industry we need to create enabling conditions through regulatory predictability.

Nationally the aquaculture industry is lacking in Government Relations and Strategic Communications ability. Compared to other industries aquaculture is at the back of the pack.

The challenge is how we bring a variety of players to the table;

Government (provincial/federal)
Industry
ENGOs
Land owners
First nations

Communications

We have a problem with the majority of people not knowing the direction the program is going.

We've had many programs (2004 program for sustainable aquaculture) and mergers. We have has mergers, hangovers from the PCB scare and a new framework agreement. The start/stop positioning has confused many people.

We need to outline what are the clear program deliverables.

- Harmonizing regulatory with provinces
- Public confidence and food safety
- Regulatory side (habitat)

We are working on little dots with no overarching program. There's no clear connection with each initiative to the bigger picture.

We've had little traction to say anything new.

We have not been affective because we have weak positions against definitive arguments (Sea Lice example)

We are 65 to 70% focused on salmon aquaculture. We need to look at ideas beyond salmon including shellfish, freshwater and other species.

Science may not always be right (closed containment). It needs to be a tool not the deciding factor.

Would love to take aquaculture to the seal hunt model but we need the resources to do that.

We need stronger internal linkages to the 4 pillars.

In BC we should work towards neutralizing while on the East Coast we can promote innovation and economic performance. We need targeted communications to targeted stakeholders.

Chefs
Retail
Farmer's markers

Buy local think global.

We have had some success. The 2006 road show in BC with policy and science meeting with journalists. We did editorial boards and received some positive balanced coverage.

What is needed

We need more informed public/stakeholders

We need the discussion framed in the broader context of societal benefits/issues

We need to talk about the impacts of climate change as we are losing connection with the bigger picture

We need even more information available

We need to begin work towards certification which equals sustainability.

We should NOT ever get engaged in a public science debate. We need to communicate science both good and bad.

We need to provide that stamp of approval (certification)

We need to host an industry summit to reflect on the success of the NGO message.

We need to work with science to determine - where are the areas that are not frequented by wild salmon.

We are afraid to put scientists together because they "won't agree". Therefore we are allowing bad science to continue.

We need to develop a two track approach;

1) science based communications
2) non-science communications

Bring in international experts to review our industry
Web/Market/Email/Media

We need strong stakeholder engagement to find collaborative solutions.

We need a plan where the program is going as it relates to the 4 pillars.

The WWF is one organization we could engage in an aquaculture dialogue with as they are not extreme.

We need to bring all the players together to find the right solutions.

Key Messages – Clean and Right

It's the role of government to help the industry structure itself. While we are doing that we have to be careful not to promote the industry as that would be environmentally hazardous.

We need a real eco-system view – not just sub-species - Where do humans fit into the equation?

It is the federal government's responsibility to bring the scientists together.

We need to develop the corporate will within DFO to win the communications battle.

Central and Arctic Region

Primarily we are talking about Freshwater aquaculture industry. It's an 80 million dollar a year industry – primarily rainbow trout.

There is significant freshwater research happening in this region.

We have opposition from environmental groups who tend to be well organized.

Largest fresh water aquaculture site in Canada is located in Saskatchewan.

While we tend to work on site approval with the province on a site by site basis, a lake management system (like the Bay management systems being used out east) would be ideal.

The Aquaculture industry in Canada virtually started in Ontario. The first cage site was located in Perry Sound and it still exists today which clearly points to the sustainability.

Over the years there has been no real growth however due to opposition and lack of government commitment (Provincial and federal).

Fresh water science has lagged behind marine and there has been very mixed views on the provincial side.

Because of a lack of knowledge on the DFO role, DFO is not at the table on a lot of freshwater issues.

As well we have had capacity issues on the communications side (which we have just recently rectified)

We have not been able to respond in an adequate fashion to negative media (lack of capacity)

We need a plan to bring stakeholders together and educate.

Upcoming Freshwater Cage Aquaculture Forum (March 09) is a great opportunity to bring science, NGOs and First Nations to the same table.

There are distinct cultural issues between urban and rural.

Science should never discuss the benefits of aquaculture. A good scientist won t say whether something is good or bad. Alexandra Morton and David Suzuki are not well respected within the scientific community.

We need to go to the people with the actual facts

DFO science is not allowed to talk to the media.

Perry sound is a great example where the aquaculture and wild fishery have co-existed through a positive turn-around in the condition of the fishery. This proves the sustainability of the cage fishery.

We're reactive and when we react we're too slow. We simply haven't invested.

We are somewhat vulnerable because many of the farms have been in operation prior to DFo's involvement. We don't have a good handle on their impact. We need to develop predictive models but we are resource challenged.

Freshwater has received very little priority

What Is Needed

Very difficult for DFO to do on its own. We need to bring the province and industry along.

It's up to communications to engage science to determine whether claims made by opponents are based in fact. If not – we must correct.

We need relevant information available off the shelf.

We need to communicate that freshwater fishery is environmentally sustainable – the web site should say this. We need a brochure on this. We need to state that all industry players are engaged in environmental protection. They need clean water for healthy fish.

The strategy needs to define the messages we want to communicate and the audiences we need to communicate to. To date we have nothing targeted towards aquaculture for central and arctic.

We need to communicate that the industry is regulated.

We need to develop and then communicate monitoring programs

We need to let the public know the product is safe. In fact farmed trout has lower mercury levels than wild stocks.

DFO Gulf Region

Sr. Management

We are primarily talking shell-fish aquaculture

The aquaculture industry has a lot of challenges but also a lot of opportunities.

In PEI we have the tunicates issue, a lack of space and an industry that keeps the pricing low by fighting each other.

We are very good at producing but we don't know how to sell our fish well.

DFO is not very good at the marketing angle.

We continue to deal with conflicts between aquaculture, fishery and tourism.

The industry tends to be secretive

We need to convince companies of the benefits of being open and sharing

We are moving towards a regulatory environment with Bay management which allows for easier approvals. We're not fighting individual issues which have tended to take a company' resources leaving no money left for marketing.

We need to look at a generic marketing structure for mussels - Canadian Seafood Council

The inconsistency across the department on our mandate is due to how we approach the regulatory role region by region. This stems from the fact that some are uncomfortable with aquaculture being contained within DFO.

This requires a cultural shift within the department. That has to come from a variety of levels starting with each RDG.

We have a huge opportunity in moving aquaculture into deeper water. We need to continue to put research and resources into exploring this.

We need to convince the commercial fishermen in this region that aquaculture provides a great opportunity for diversity. Particularly with shellfish which has not underlying health or habitat issues.

The relationship we have with the province is a problem at times but very solvable. It requires regular communications. A policy board with the province/feds/industry.

We don't communicate DFO's role as well as we should. As it relates to containment/escapes and health issues.

Our mandate shifted under Dhaliwal. Used to be regulatory with science looking at the interactions. Dhaliwal said we need to be an enabler.

"I think we are better off being vague about our role because it gives DFO more room to discreetly move the industry forward. If we're too explicit nothing will ever get done because of opposition. This is a prevailing attitude throughout the department."

We need to determine what it actually means to be the lead federal agency on aquaculture.

We're trying to be too much. Regulator, manager and promoter.

Gulf Region Communications

Aquaculture seems to be doing great in Atlantic Canada although it does have a negative perception with commercial fishermen.

The public doesn't know much and nobody listens to us when we speak.

The province is essentially approving all applications. We need more input from all stakeholders like coastal residents. We need to work hard on the relationships with all stakeholders.

There really are 2 worlds – east Coast and west coast.

In Atlantic Canada we have 2 worlds again

Bay of Fundy/NL - Salmon and Cod
PEI – Shellfish (good news)

Very few problems on the east. In the west they are dealing with pollution and problems to the eco-system. I don't agree with taking Atlantic salmon and growing them in cages on the west coast.

We have cleaned all the pollution issues in this region

As soon as shellfish sights get too close to the public eye it becomes an issue.

Atlantic Canadians embrace aquaculture because of local pride. Our PEI Potatoes and PEI mussels.

Also, Atlantic Canada has consistently been a depressed economic region. The economic activity of aquaculture is much more important here than on the west coast.

Also on the east coast its local owned where as on the west coast the companies are from away.

In Northern Europe they tend to spend a lot of time telling people they're doing it right.

It's very difficult for the government to promote the industry. The industry itself should ban together to better market their product.

Competition is stronger than any association.

One of our biggest challenges is that there are no fixed regulations dealing with aquaculture in Canada. DFO applies regulations and tends to be in a regulatory/Science mode. We spend very little effort towards a proactive role because we are afraid of the province accusing the department of stepping into their role.

We CANNOT do more for aquaculture that we do for the traditional fishery.

Promotion is NOT part of our mandate.

We have a lot of good news.

Scallops
Cod
Halibut
Mussels
Oysters

Certification and eco-labelling would be a good marketing tool.

In 1984 we had a marketing division at DFO. We promoted fishing, processing and quality. Every region had a teaching kitchen and sponsored fish-tasting week. We are now out of that business.

Gulf Region Science

We will never have offshore aquaculture because too many fishermen fear being displaced.

There is no real concern about the impacts of shellfish aquaculture because of the levels we produce.

We need a better alignment of science and the economy.

Currently it's a big challenge for fisheries managers to integrate aquaculture into DFO. Currently there aren't any mechanisms for fishermen to get more involved in the process.

Science should be used as a decision point – not the focus of the debate.

Other factors that need to be considered include economic and social.

We currently have an inability to get past the scientific debate. Also we haven't done any favours by selling aquaculture as the next big business in Canada – it scares the general public and conjures images of pollution etc.

We try to use too much generalization regarding aquaculture. Shellfish is a greener industry.

Science should create the information (research) and communications should transfer the knowledge.

We tend to use science as a catch all as opposed to getting involved in the socio-economic factors.

Shell Fish Aquaculture fits DFO whereas Fin-Fish Aquaculture better fits in Agriculture because of its dumping activity.

It's a risky road going down the path of multi-tropic aquaculture. We can't solve the public issue by adding new activities.

We need to bring all stakeholders together and we need a plan on how to communicate better with dealing with stakeholders.

We are very reactive. A lot of issues could be resolved before hand. We need to be much more proactive.

There is a fundamental belief that Canadians own their aquatic resources. We need a clearer message from DFO that aquaculture is sustainable and a viable industry.

We're actually supporting the business of NGOs by making it easy for them to make money and harder for the aqua culturists to make money.

Gulf AIS

Aquaculture presents an opportunity to provide the world with good seafood product.

Wild fishery is in trouble. Some of it is man induced but much is environmental factors we don't fully understand.

The trouble with shellfish aquaculture is that we have taken away the ocean playground and left ocean highways.

We need to resurrect the idea of a national marketing board to ensure a good return to the processor. Look at New Zealand. They are not competitive inside the country – just outside.

What is needed

We need a strategy with some generic national material but very much specific to each region. We need to be a lot more strategic.

We need to deal with misconceptions and highlight the positives.

We need to be proactive and very strategic.

We need to better position ourselves to play our role.

We need to talk more about integrated Bay Management.

The new resource in Maritime Region needs to be fully bilingual (written and spoken). They need to travel and not always work out of Halifax. They will require a lot of O&M. All the time and effort needs to be on high-value stuff.

One option might be to differentiate and have a Fin-Fish specialist on the West Coast and a Shell Fish Specialist on the East Coast.

They are doing something right in Norway where aquaculture is not negative. We should explore what.

We need a greater awareness by the general public on why we produce fish and the benefits of farmed fish and shellfish.

We need to highlight the economic benefits and jobs.

We need to highlight the consistent quality of the product and the sustainability of the supply.

We need to show the world the good food Canada is producing. We need to show Canadians what we're talking about.

We need to work on DFO employees/Public Servants who live in coastal communities who may be too chummy with commercial fishermen. They may drive part of the opposition and the myths about aquaculture.

We need a national voice for DFO.

We need to tell stories and put pride in what we do.

We need to position scientists to be respected for what we do. Our work is peer reviewed. We need to stick to the facts.

Some scientists have argued that science comes before the department's mandate. Accountability to science does not allow us to ignore the mandate of the department.

Maritimes Region

Biological Station

Aquaculture is a consolidating industry that is making it easier to manage. The major players on the east coast are vibrant, healthy and sustainable companies.

We have a good relationship with Cooke/Industry

We speak with the province a lot. We don't always agree because it continues to be the commercial fishery vs. the aquaculture industry.

The challenge for DFO is we are required to be enabler, developer and regulator but it is a challenge that s manageable. Outside it looks like a contradictory mandate and we haven't done a good job at explaining it.

As a department we still tend to lean towards to commercial fishery because of the socio-economic impact of that industry on this region.

There is definitely more acceptance for aquaculture in NB than in NS. Part of that is the ocean to plate initiative.

The Bay Management approach is allowing us to do the right thing.

There continues to be resentment towards aquaculture but the business has really turned to corner.

For the most part we have fixed some of the early problems of overcrowding, pollution etc.

Cooke has done a lot of PR including town hall meetings. It's because they have the resources. Cooke is also working towards their own certification.

DFO has to encourage the industry to take these steps by showing "We're in this together."

One great example of the industry moving in the right direction is the code of containment they established on their own and then came to government for endorsement.

The industry is telling government that "someone needs to defend the industry."

Aquaculture has not strong government support like in agriculture. We as a government have not done a good job in promoting the industry. Ottawa is stuck on a national standard without realizing that aquaculture is not the same from coast to coast.

DFO also has a credibility issue because of promises made and not followed through.

Another issue is that control is centrally located in Ottawa which is nuts. The regions could do a better job.

DFO has to define its role more clearly- both inside and out. We need to find the right balance between promote and enforce.

Farmed salmon is on every list of food to avoid. Why isn't DFO standing up and fighting this?

The west coast has a screwed up ecosystem. They are full of sea lice. I don't agree with how BC industry has grown.

On east coast the industry and NGOs are working a lot closer. Also on east coast the role of DFO scientist is very important in forging strong relationship with the industry.

DFO continues to walk on pins and needles on the west coast.

Science should be used to demonstrate how we are changing things for the better.

East coast gets pulled into the west coast debate all the time. – We don't give a shit about the west coast.

Science

Canada's aquaculture industry is not doing well at all.

We are mostly talking about Salmon.

We are really only successful because of our proximity to the US market.

This industry won't expand much except in NL and in Northern BC (if the public perception changes)

People are talking about the opportunities offshore but we have habitat management issues and a conflict between the different industries using the same piece of water.

We have spent time and effort developing new species and then don't have the resources to move into development stage.

We don't have the grants we had access to in the past that got businesses jump started in the industry. The Government of Canada got out of that.

Our science on these new species is being used by other countries who are winning the competitive marketplace.

DFO needs regulatory requirements for aquaculture.

One of the big issues on the west coast is that the companies that own the operations there are not part of the community.

We talk a lot about the opportunity for Cod Aquaculture. It may be successful but right now the cost per unit is not good and the market is not really there.

We are science based department. In the past it wasn't the norm to put our research through peer review. We have since realized it should have been.

More Science is required.

Science should be used to support decision making in regulation and to support the sustainability of the industry.

We need to better separate the 2 functions of DFO for aquaculture (Protection and Promotion)

We sometimes forget we are not really producing food. We are producing money.

The east coast industry is very open because they know they have a good product and a sustainable industry.

Sr. Management – Maritime

Aquaculture industry is in relatively good shape.

The industry has done good work to deal with some of the issues – particular from an environmental perspective.

The perception still exists that wild fish are more healthy than farmed.

Over the past 15 years there have been huge improvements in processes and protocols.

There is a lot of opportunity in NS. – We have a lot of space to develop. The province wants more.

The challenges continue to be 3-fold:

1) Environmental performance and the quality of the product
2) The impact of industry on the traditional fishery
3) The transparency of the regulatory process – we find it difficult to talk about regulation

One real change is the coastal planning/bay management

We need to communicate that lot's of activities have impact on marine environments. We allow opposition to focus on aquaculture alone.

This will not be a quick process. We need to develop trust with all stakeholders. It will take time. We have good science tools.

We need to determine what an acceptable level of risk is and communicate that.

While science is useful to a certain point it can't defend the "no impact" argument put forward by NGOs. Science can be used to determine how we can reduce impact to an acceptable level.

There remain a lot of thorny issues between feds/province.

A National marketing approach is NOT DFOs role.

We could facilitate a national forum for retailers/importers and exporters.

We need to find a better way to get the important information out.

Marketing the industry is NOT DFOs job. The industry needs better market intelligence. Some have argued the marketing is becoming our jobs because of demands by consumers. – It's NOT DFOs role.

We can create conditions that make it easier for them but we cannot lead the industry there.

It's our job to manage the fishery and to pursue gaps in the framework.

We can use current conditions to force the industry to get its act together. Certification and eco-certification will come because consumers demand it.

What is needed

We need to communicate we have coastal management plans with pre-determined zones

We need some way to establish the idea with the public that zero impact is simply not realistic. We need to show all marine activity has an impact and that aquaculture is operating at an acceptable level.

We need a way for the public to have ready access to environmental performance of the aquaculture industry – maybe an annual performance report.

We need to communicate the comparison between this industry and other industries

We need to move the industry towards working more collaboratively through collective marketing, so they work with DFO etc.

We can't forget most of our product is sold to the US.

We need to protect our brand as being clean, healthy and good for you.

We need an orientation program to outline the roles and responsibilities within DFO.

We need to renew the MOU's to better reinforce DFO's role

We need to get the DFO perspective out.

We need a clear statement on roles and responsibilities – strong statement like "Aquaculture has a place in our environment."

We need to better demonstrate the success stories which exist out there.

We need better proactive planning. Who's on first? What's our 10 year plan?

Stronger voice out of Ottawa

Separation on east coast and west coast aquaculture.

Focus on the facts that aquaculture is a sustainable industry provide food.

We need to highlight the 10 biggest improvements the industry has done based on science.

We need to find the science that is more positive and more encouraging.

We need communications people to take more of a role in stakeholder outreach.

We need to talk about the improvements compared to 15 years ago.

We need to be more proactive.

We need to enhance our communications around the Boston seafood show.

We need to focus communications in the globe and mail and Boston and NYC.

We need to get farmed salmon removed from the no eat list.

Newfoundland and Labrador Region

Sr. Management

The aquaculture industry is on the verge of a major expansion. We are very optimistic about the future.

We are seeing major investments by Cooke and others.

Shellfish has been stable for a number of years. It's looking very promising on the fin fish side.

This industry is placing a lot of demands on NL resources which is why is require such a good management program.

Government's role is two-fold

1) Environmental Governance Regime
   - Very solid relationship between feds/province
   - A need to move to Bay Management concepts

2) Develop Infrastructure
   - To support small craft harbours that currently don't work for aquaculture users.

ENGO are a non starter in NL although the issues in others regions certainly have an impact. Example – Sea Lice kills wild fish. They hear that and believe it for NL even though we don't have sea lice. There's been no real work on distinguishing between Atlantic and Pacific.

There needs to be a mechanism in the department to intelligently decide which battles were are going to fight.

It's not only government's responsibility

DFO has 3 main mandates/Pillars

1) Regulatory
2) Development
3) Advisory

There is a lot of ambiguity. We are using the same legislation designed to manage the traditional fishery to manage aquaculture.

Internal communications needs a lot of work. There is a lack of adequate internal communications.

It will require a real cultural shift and a movement towards providing front line people with adequate linkages to the issues we are trying to solve.

We are seeing RDG's begin to change their focus. We need to get regional people to take notice.

HQ liaison is important, but RDG's will have the most profound effect in the regions.

While we need to be clear on where fed/prov responsibilities begin and end, the general public wants a one window approach and they don't care whose responsibility it is.

The escaped salmon issue in BC recently – both NL region and the province would have commented if that had happened here.

The department is doing a better job in the last couple of years. The National material is very very good.

However there is a raging wildfire in BC and the material we produce needs to be more regionally specific. We don t have the same problems they do in BC.

Communicating science is difficult.

We tend to deal with things on an issue by issue basis.

We need to look at how we have dealt with similar issues like the seal hunt. Our approach there is not working. The Seal Hunt communications may resonate outside the region but not in the region. We have achieved balanced media but we have not diminished the conflict in the region.

We need to communicate the concept of a working coast. Look what they did in Maine. They launched a campaign that said this was not cottage country – but a working coast.

We need to better understand the mandate. We also need to be careful how we apply that mandate.

We need to think of our front line people at the local level who are involved in a lot of issues at the local level.

Trying to pursue co-existence is increasingly difficult.

At the local level its very important that people be aware of DFO's

- role
- the issues
- mitigation tactics
- We need to refute inaccuracies along the way

One of our biggest issues in the department is the risk tolerance of individuals versus the management policy of the department. That has to be fixed.

We made a conscious decision a number of years ago to get out of industry development. We have stepped back into that with aquaculture. There is no legislative reason we are pursuing Market Access and Certification tactics – Why are we doing it?

Facts alone won't change people's values.

We should talk more about Bay Management but by highlighting it here we highlight the fact that they don't do it BC.

One major challenge is that while the regulatory regime is the same across the country, the application and the provincial policies are very different. For instance I can tell you just how fish are in hatcheries and cages in NL. They can't do that in BC.

While we don't need to apply a cookie cutter approach we do need coherency and consistency. There are differences in mandate delivery that are just not justified.

NL Science

This is a very exciting time for aquaculture in NL. We have seen the movement of big companies to our region who are investing in expansion.

In Newfoundland people understand the socio-economic benefits of the aquaculture industry.

We need to continue on the science that supports the industry

Most of the companies coming here are from away. We need more information to NL companies about the opportunities from aquaculture.

We need to talk about sustainable development and that DFO is working, through science, to minimize the impacts of all fisheries related activity.

Science is the basis for what the industry is all about. Science can tell you where to put them, what to feed them, what is required for sustainability.

Our industry is still young. We can learn lessens from BC and NB and all the problems they have had there.

In NB in early years sites were handed out with no consideration from something like Bay Management. That had negative impacts on the eco-system

Science needs to continue to evolve. We need to be more transparent with the science.

We need much more education to what science is doing.

We need more joint projects with other regions and other federal agencies.

The industry and the general public need to know why science is good for them

One major problem is a lack of internal communications that impacts relationships with stakeholders.

What is needed

We need to find a way to address the sea lice communications issue in Atlantic Canada.

We need to identify key differences in the way regulations are enforced across the country and work towards more consistency. This will lead to a more efficient delivery of service to the industry.

We need more information to NL companies about the opportunities from aquaculture.

We need constant communications with all stakeholders.

We need to be more proactive with stakeholders to facilitate good partnerships.

We need to communicate the results of the science we do.

We need science communications plans for each region.

Industry and Industry Associations

Marine Harvest

We are looking to change the way we communicate. We are spending more time and money on public facing communications to let people know the facts and what we are doing to protect the Broughton.

Our relationship with the eNGOs is mixed. We have some success with some groups but, when it comes to Morton and her followers, we have not been able to make any headway.

We are looking to talk more about our impact on the region, our commitment to wild stock protection and the facts about the science of aquaculture.

We are focusing more on Corporate Social Responsibility and community.

We are publicly offering to work with the ENGOs in a partnership towards common goals and with the realistic groups (CAAR) we are gaining some headway. One such area is the discussion around closed containment.

One thing you never hear anyone talk about is Salmon ranching which is happening in a significant way in Alaska.

CAIA

Has engaged Fleischman Hillard to work on National communications approach. Would like to see more coordination and collaboration with DFO and other industry players.

CAIA is committed to building stronger relationships with the national media

"We are here to support regional efforts but not to do their job for them."

There are clearly some things DFO can't say that CAIA can. DFO should talk more about the regulatory regime because it means more coming from them.

We need to develop a national tools chest for better communication about the industry.

We are not necessarily looking for DFO to be an advocate. DFO, when it talks about the industry should talk about the research that is happening, the regulatory regime and should work towards consistent application of the framework across the country.

The deputy minister told us that up until now ensuring the consistency of the policy was"not fun work" but that DFO was turning it's head to that now.

The Provinces need to input as well.

CAIA is looking at new ways of doing things.

We have decided, based on our membership, that we can't take the lowest or the highest standard within the industry - we need to promote what is right. It's not one producer or another.

The escape issue – the company's responsibility.

A national aquaculture forum to share ideas and develop a work plan would be a great idea.

One example of what worked well was our preparation for the Green Peace study.

We need a white paper on Canadian Aquaculture to define the potential, frame the issues and create opportunities to dialogue.

NAIA

Great deal of opportunity and optimism for aquaculture in our region.

We have issues related to social license but things are generally positive

"BC – that's just whew!!!"

We need to do better understanding the differences and that there will be more difficult times ahead. We just need to plan for them

Our biggest issue is the social license issue – people see bays as a public resource.

We need government defending the industry. Look at agriculture and how it defends industry. DFO tends to say "we don't have enough information," or "we should do a science review."

We need science behind the statements but it needs to be balanced.

The industry associations have very recently adopted a mandate of communications. – was not the focus before.

COOKE

50% of what Cooke produces stays in Canada.

We are working towards our own 3rd party certification – Seafood Trust Eco Label.

Industry as a whole doe not want national certification

Issue not necessarily with the consumer but at the retail level.

What Is Needed

We need to bring all stakeholders to the table and talk about where we need to go/how we manage growth and how we need to communicate.

We need to engage people before the questions are asked, they have already been asked somewhere.

We need to work with stakeholders on the co-existing of fishery and aquaculture.

We need to talk about the positives this brings for rural NL.

We need to talk about various issues including the economy and the science – that aquaculture can be done in a sustainable manner.

DFO needs to work with CAIA to ensure everyone is on the same page.

We need to see the minister or someone at a Sr. level within DFO with strong, science-based statements, defending the industry. When there are issues the department has to say it convincingly.

We need the national media to know who to go to.

We need to replace the marketing money (LAFI) being phased out.

We need to focus on influencers like chefs and food writers and PR people.

We need to get accurate information to consumers.

We need a stronger minister's voice.

The department needs more freedom to speak up on science.

We need to form a national crisis team/war room for issues to ensure it's coordinated.

We need more knowledge about who the companies are.

We need to inform the public that companies have learned from their mistakes. We are accountable and heavily regulated.