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EVIDENCE

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Mr. MacAulay, you've asked to have the floor.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to bring a motion to the floor:

That, given the potential consequences of the government's proposed Aquaculture Activity Regulations, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a study on what effects these regulatory changes will have on Canada's oceans, fish habitat, and marine and coastal environments, and call witnesses including the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, senior departmental officials, and interested stakeholder groups to testify before the Committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

On November 24, 2014 notice was given. It has been moved by Mr. MacAulay:

That given the potential consequences of the government's proposed Aquaculture Activity Regulations, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a study on what effects these regulatory changes will have on Canada's oceans, fish habitat, and marine and coastal environments, and call witnesses including the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, senior departmental officials, and interested stakeholder groups to testify before the Committee.

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Chair, a large number of people who are concerned about these changes have written to me and to the Prime Minister, so I think it is important that these people have a hearing to indicate their concerns. It's important that everybody understand, to the best we can resolve, what effect they will have on the fisheries environment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay. Sorry, I was just conferring with my—

A voice: He wasn't saying anything anyway.

The Chair: Yes, I know.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I did notice you stopped talking.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Following our usual practice with committee business, I move that we go in camera.

The Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Kamp that this committee move in camera.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The motion is carried. We'll suspend for a few moments until the committee moves in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

• _____ (Pause) _____

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[Public proceedings resume]

• (1140)

The Chair: We'll call this meeting back to order.

Before we get started, Monsieur Lapointe, I believe you wanted to provide notice of motion.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): I would like to put forward a motion that reads as follows:

That the Committee hold at least one meeting as soon as possible to study the impact of listing the Atlantic Sturgeon under the *Species at Risk Act* (St. Lawrence populations) and that the Committee make recommendations regarding the possible ecological, cultural and economic impact of listing these populations under the *Species at Risk Act*, in accordance with the Fisheries and Oceans consultations ending on February 27, 2015, and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House at the first opportunity.

The reason we would like the committee to look into this situation urgently is because the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, COSEWIC, recommended in 2011 that the species be declared endangered.

[English]

The Chair: Today you just provided notice of motion. When you move the motion, I'll let you get into the—

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: It's not a problem. I simply wanted to explain why it was urgent.

[English]

The Chair: I appreciate that. Yes, I'll give you the opportunity to get in the rest at that time. Thank you.

Notice of motion has been provided by Monsieur Lapointe. We will now move on to our business at hand.

I want to thank the department officials for joining us today to discuss our study on recreational fisheries.

Mr. Stringer, I know you're no stranger to this committee and I certainly appreciate you and your colleagues appearing today. I'll let you introduce your colleagues as you make your opening remarks.

Mr. Kevin Stringer (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): *Merci.* Thank you very much.

It is a pleasure for us to be here to provide some background on recreational fisheries in Canada. We understand that you're interested in that issue and looking at doing a study on it. We'll speak to it, as well as to the role that Fisheries and Oceans Canada plays in the management of recreational fisheries.

Permit me to introduce my colleagues who are witnesses with me today. Melinda Lontoc-Roy is the policy and program advisor in the fisheries protection program. She's responsible for delivering the recreational fisheries conservation program.

Andrew McMaster is a senior fisheries officer. He's in fisheries resource management and has a lead responsibility here in Ottawa for recreational fisheries.

Alain Vézina is acting director general for our science sector, our ecosystems and oceans science.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Recreational fisheries hold significant value to Canada. Our department conducted a national survey on recreational fishing in Canada. The survey takes place every five years through collaboration between federal, provincial and territorial governments. The most recent survey was in 2010, and it shows that almost 3.3 million people—or almost one in very 10 Canadians—fished recreationally in Canada in 2010, spending over \$8 billion related to their recreational fishing activities. This includes over 400,000 foreign anglers, who come from all over the world to enjoy the experience of recreational fishing in Canada.

Recreational fishing takes place in every province and territory, and plays a key socio-economic role in many communities. A number of studies address the value of recreational fishing. For example, an economic impact study commissioned by the Quebec Atlantic Salmon Federation showed that the value of just that one species is over \$250 million, with anglers spending over \$125 million annually.

And Atlantic salmon fishing activities supports almost 4,000 full-time equivalent jobs in 2010.

[English]

It's important to highlight that federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdictions all have responsibilities for managing recreational fisheries in Canada.

While managing fishing activity, including recreational fishing, falls under federal jurisdiction, legislation, and regulations, the provinces and territories effectively manage most inland and freshwater fisheries. They control access in their waters through licensing regimes, and in many cases have the responsibility to

manage inland fisheries through informal or formal agreements with Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

While there is a significant marine recreational fishery in Canada, it really is these inland freshwater fisheries that have the most significant activity. The 2010 survey that I mentioned showed that the most caught species nationally was walleye, followed by trout, perch, bass, and pike. Marine species, such as salmon, halibut, etc., were further down the list.

While provinces and territories effectively manage the freshwater fisheries for the most part, the federal government manages marine or tidal fisheries. We also manage fisheries, such as salmon, that are found in both marine and freshwater environments, though in those cases the provinces issue the licences.

A unique arrangement exists in a couple of areas. In Quebec, for example, the Government of Quebec has the authority for managing recreational fishing in both inland and tidal waters. In Newfoundland, it's different again. It's basically all federally managed, both freshwater and marine, though the province issues licences.

With all of these jurisdictional issues, we need effective cooperation. We seek and do manage to have effective cooperation among all relevant jurisdictions to ensure that our natural resources are properly managed.

Our department and other governments apply a broad range of tools to manage recreational fisheries to ensure their sustainability. In most recreational fisheries, licences are required to permit any recreational fishing activity. There are exceptions to this, including many of the marine species in Atlantic Canada and many of the shellfish recreational harvests. As with commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries have many other types of management measures to control how, where, and when fishing takes place. These include a fishing season, catch-and-release requirements, daily or seasonal catch and retention limits, tags, size restrictions, gear restrictions, etc. We apply these based on the conservation requirements of the various fisheries, and we seek to work with fisheries groups in terms of what requirements are appropriate and how to apply them.

I'll give you a couple of examples. The ling cod fishery in some areas off B.C. limits to 10 fish per season, with a minimum length of 65 cm. The recreational striped bass fishery in New Brunswick limits anglers to retaining and possessing only one fish per day during limited retention periods. It requires fishers to use a single non-offset barbless hook when using bait and restricts retention only to fish between 55 cm and 65 cm in length.

The recreational groundfish in Newfoundland and Labrador is restricted to two specific fishery seasons, which allow a total of 32 days of fishing. There is a limit of five per day. Retention of Atlantic halibut, wolffish, and sharks is prohibited. There are gear restrictions, such as the number of hooks, and the list goes on in terms of different rules for different fisheries.

Overall, however, it's an \$8-billion activity. Recreational fishing makes an important contribution to Canada's economy.

Even though some of the trends—and I can speak to that if you wish—show that there are fewer people involved in recreational fishing than there were a generation ago, the recreational fishing community is passionate and active, and certainly engaged with our department.

Along with recreational groups and other governments, we are always looking for new opportunities, new potentials, and new partnerships.

Governments invest significantly in the science and management of recreational fisheries. It is quite difficult to tease out exactly how much we spend on recreational fishing. Stock assessments done for fish apply to and benefit both commercial and recreational fisheries. We maintain a regular program of stock assessment, for example relating to key recreational harvested fish species, which are also harvested commercially: Pacific salmon, halibut, groundfish, mackerel, sharks, tuna, shellfish, etc.

Our fisheries managers work closely with provinces, territories, and all stakeholders to implement the sustainable management measures. The department has recently begun to use social media, Twitter and other modes to reach anglers in new and innovative ways.

Our enforcement officers work hard to ensure compliance with the rules, which is a challenge in recreational fisheries, monitoring and enforcing harvest activities throughout the country.

The provincial and territorial governments also play an important role in enforcement. There is cross-designation for enforcement, which applies to recreational as well as to other fisheries.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

In recent years, the department has also facilitated the development of new recreational fishing opportunities, such as the charter groundfish and tuna industries, striped bass derbies, and recreational tourism initiatives, such as lobster and crab charters. These opportunities provide important socio-economic benefits to several local communities in Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

Another important initiative is our partnerships with angling, watershed and conservation groups through the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program. Launched in 2013, it manages the distribution of \$25 million over three years to support the restoration of fisheries habitat through partnerships with local groups.

The program promotes multi-partner initiatives and supports projects led by recreational fishing and angling groups, as well as conservation organizations, aimed at improving Canada's recreational fisheries. These groups have established expertise and collaborative approaches in fisheries conservation, and are well-positioned to deliver habitat restoration projects that benefit recreational fisheries.

[*English*]

Program funding allows program recipients to take action to restore, rebuild, and rehabilitate compromised or threatened fisheries

habitats in areas that are important to the sustainability and productivity of Canada's recreational fisheries.

We also work with groups across the country such as the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation. We have the Pacific salmon conservation stamp program. All of that enables partnerships on both coasts.

Through our programs and through our consultative arrangements, the department has important relationships with many angling and recreational groups. This is particularly the case, I would say, on the west coast where we work very closely with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board. We also have important relationships with angling and conservation groups across the country, groups such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, various provincial wings of the Canadian Wildlife Federation, and through our work on the fisheries protection program. The recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program has enabled us to broaden and deepen these relationships. One of the most active groups is on Atlantic salmon with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, but there are many other recreational and local conservation groups where we are all concerned about decreasing stocks, particularly in the southern ranges where Atlantic salmon occur.

It's for this reason that Minister Shea announced the creation of a ministerial advisory committee on Atlantic salmon on December 18, 2014. The intention of this committee is to combine the knowledge of individuals with recognized expertise on Atlantic salmon and provide recommendations to the minister on prioritizing conservation efforts in the near and medium term.

In addition to our work to further develop relationships with recreational groups, we know there are areas in which we can make improvements in how we manage these fisheries. Specifically, we are considering mechanisms to improve the data we collect on recreational harvest in tidal waters, the number of participants, the level of harvest, etc. New industry approaches are being developed on the west coast, for example, to improve education and awareness of the importance of effective catch reporting.

I mentioned earlier the survey of recreational fishing in Canada. We're currently coordinating the next version, the next iteration of this, for 2015. The results will be out in the latter half of 2016. It provides comprehensive information on our recreational fisheries across the country: federal, provincial, and territorial. It shows trends that are very interesting to look at year over year over year: the types of fish caught, the average age, the gender of fishermen, the expenditures that are spent, the fishing effort, and the different types of management measures in place.

In closing, I do want to reiterate the importance of the recreational fishery across the country. While much of our department's traditional focus has been on commercial fisheries—and we will continue to maintain that important focus for those who depend on the fishery for their livelihood—we know that the cultural and socioeconomic benefits from recreational fishing are important to Canada and to Canadians. They make an important contribution both to Canada's culture and to Canada's economy.

Recent financial and relationship investments by the department underline that importance. We'll continue to make those investments. We'll continue to work with our provincial and territorial regulatory partners to enable a vibrant and sustainable recreational fishery in Canada.

We're very pleased to take your questions on this important matter today.

Thank you.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Stringer. We certainly do appreciate your presentation.

We're going to start off with a 10-minute round. We'll go with Mr. Chisholm first.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I indicated, I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Cleary.

Thank you, Mr. Stringer. There's no doubt about the importance of the recreational fishery across the country.

I was interested in the establishment of the ministerial advisory committee on Atlantic salmon in December by the minister. The 2010 study of the economic benefit of the recreational fishery and the Atlantic salmon...where are those figures? A continued deterioration in the stocks throughout Atlantic Canada has been causing, frankly, some considerable concern.

I have to say that I was really disappointed with the decision that was taken last year, I believe a year ago last fall, to shut down—bulldoze, frankly—the Mersey Biodiversity centre, the facility in Liverpool that had been doing such important work on trying to determine what was going on with the Southern Uplands Atlantic salmon, and had been involved in some stocking, not only with Atlantic salmon but with whitefish.

I know the justification at that point was, we're consolidating and we'll do more of that work elsewhere. I'd like to hear your response, given the fact that clearly, the minister has finally recognized there are some serious problems with Atlantic salmon in the Maritimes and Atlantic Canada. Why was the decision taken? Would you not agree that was a decision that will undoubtedly have some impact on the future viability of the Southern Uplands Atlantic salmon?

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Thanks for the question. I'll start, but I'll ask Alain to add.

Just in terms of Atlantic salmon, as the member has pointed out, the advisory committee has been announced and is getting under way.

We are seeing significant reductions. We had a commercial fishery in this fishery previously, which was closed in 1998. The recreational fishery's enormously important for cultural but also economic reasons.

We do many things in our department to support salmon management. I could go through a litany of management measures

we've taken. In fact, in some cases we've seen some encouraging signs.

The big challenge is in the southern ranges. In fact, if you look at the U.S. salmon fishery, it's just about gone. There's some view that the range is moving north, so many of our efforts...many of the areas are actually closed to fishing. In many of the areas there's catch and release, there are strict rules on it, etc. We are concerned. The last couple of years have been showing that we weren't seeing the positive signs we had been seeing, hence the committee.

We do much research. We do many things. One thing we do is live gene banking. We used to have three and now we have two facilities on the east coast for that. The three were consolidated into two. The Mersey facility was closed and its work has been largely transferred to the other two, Mactaquac and—I forgot the name of the other, but Alain will know it.

Alain, you may have more information.

Mr. Alain Vézina (Acting Director General, Science, Ecosystems and Oceans Science, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I just want to say that we did do this for consolidation, as you know. We consolidated the activities in Nova Scotia from Mersey and Coldbrook into Coldbrook only. We are able to deliver. We have experience. We've done it. We are able to deliver the program that DFO is mandated to deliver, in terms of the live gene banking, with one facility instead of two in Nova Scotia.

The only thing that was stopped was the captive breeding of Atlantic whitefish, but we have taken many other actions on the Atlantic whitefish front to ensure the recovery of that species.

Going back to Atlantic salmon, since the closure we have started a working group with stakeholders to examine and work with them on actions that can help with the support of these populations in the Southern Uplands. Even though we've made a decision, we have taken action since then to work with stakeholders and try to improve the situation with the Atlantic salmon population in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Chairman, let me just say that I don't want to get argumentative here and I appreciate the fact that there's a working group now with stakeholders looking at the Southern Uplands. But there was a year when local conservation groups and other groups that were concerned about the decision to dismantle the Mersey River Biodiversity Facility were frankly played along and their proposals not accepted by the department.

I've got to tell you, it feels a bit rich to me because I talked to a lot of them prior and they felt seriously burned that the department is now willing to consult with the stakeholders after they bulldozed down that important facility. There just seems to be such a contradiction in the actions and the words. That's what troubles me. It's not just in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and in Newfoundland rivers. In the Gaspé it was a disastrous season last year.

Mr. Chairman, I said I'd try not to get overly argumentative. I thought I'd share that. Maybe that's another question for the minister. Maybe I'll let Mr. Cleary go on it. He's much more polite, sincere, and less argumentative than I am.

•(1205)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Thanks, Robert.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before the committee.

I remember back in the early 1990s when John Crosbie shut down the northern cod fishery. He was asked a question at the time, whether or not there would be any restriction on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians being able to fish for their table. His answer was, "B'y, if the stocks ever got that low that you couldn't fish for your supper, she'd be gone, b'y."

We're at the point now where there have been restrictions on recreational fisheries for a number of years and, as you pointed out, Mr. Stringer, in your opening, in Newfoundland and Labrador the fishery is restricted to two specific fishing seasons that allow for a total of 32 days of fishing. Now the minister was good enough last fall to extend the fishery because of inclement weather, and that was good because in certain cases lives have been endangered when people go out to fish when the weather is not fit.

I've got a question for you, right off the bat. The 32 days that you're allowed to fish for cod for your table—the recreational fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador—how do the 32 days compare to the Maritimes and the total number of days that you can fish there in a season?

The second question is, you also mentioned, Mr. Stringer, about a licence being required to permit any recreational fisheries activity, with the exception of course of Newfoundland and Labrador and the recreational cod fishery and some shellfish fisheries.

People are upset in Newfoundland and Labrador in that they're restricted from recreational cod fishing in Newfoundland and Labrador more so than in the Maritimes. Why not go back to a licence system whereby Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can fish over the course of a season and they're not restricted to two fishing times? That would cut down on health and safety concerns, again, going out in the water when it's not fit to go out on the water. Is the department looking at that or would the department look at that?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I think there were two fundamental questions there.

One is, what's the comparison between what we do in groundfish cod specifically in Newfoundland and elsewhere, and the other is what we think about a recreational licence regime.

It is different in different regions and in different areas. It is largely dependent on the state of the stock and the number of people who we believe are fishing, and the impact that's going to have on the fishery.

In the maritimes region, which is what we used to call Scotia Fundy, but it's basically coastal Nova Scotia and southern New Brunswick, the season is much longer. The limit in terms of cod is 10 per day, or 5 per day depending on which particular area it's at. There are certain fish that you cannot retain so it is different, and it's different again in the gulf region. And there's not a licence required for any of the regions in Atlantic Canada or Quebec for cod. So the specific management regime is different, depending on the

circumstances, the number of people fishing, and our concern is conservation.

I will speak particularly to the Newfoundland cod fishery, which is enormously important to the people. We do absolutely understand that and our objective is to ensure that there is an opportunity, but also that we get sustained growth in that fishery and in that fish coming back. Members will know that northern cod has been at a very low level, but we are seeing signs of recovery. We were at 2% about a decade ago, 2% of what we call the limit reference point. The limit reference point is the average of the eighties. So we are at 2% in northern cod of the average of the eighties. The last advice we got, the last formal advice, is that we're at about 18%. So we're not back to where we were, but we're nine times higher than where we were.

The challenge is, we have a stewardship fishery for the commercial fishers, and we have a recreational fishery. The challenge in Newfoundland and Labrador is people absolutely love to do it, and if you open it for a day they're going to catch a lot of fish, and hence we need to find some way to manage it so that 32 days is the limit. There are other limits and I spoke to them.

In terms of a licence, members will know—and certainly the member who asked the question will know—there used to be one, and we have from time to time established a recreational licence in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have licence regimes in some areas and not in others. We'll be interested to see the advice from this committee about what makes sense. It's not particularly popular with some of the recreational fishers to have a licence regime in place, and so we put them in place where we think there is real value, that it's going to help us understand what is caught, who is catching it, etc.

Anyway, I'll stop there, but it is an interesting question. I'd be prepared to answer it again, but I know I've talked for a while.

•(1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Stringer.

Thank you, Mr. Cleary.

Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to make a point of clarification. There's this idea out there that there's commercial fishing, which is all about livelihood, and recreational fishing, which is about recreation. But we must be really clear that there are many communities and people who depend economically on the recreational fishery.

You mentioned, Mr. Stringer, in your presentation that the recreational fishery has a value of about \$8 billion in Canada. What is the equivalent value of commercial fishing in Canada?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I have two points.

One is, you're absolutely right, I did say commercial livelihood. The lodges and a number of businesses depend fundamentally on the recreational fishery.

Second, it depends how you want to refer to the commercial total value. I don't know that anybody has ever done a comparison with that \$8 billion, because that \$8 billion includes travel costs, etc. The landed value is north of \$2 billion. The total value in terms of once you have the processing sector, etc. for the commercial fishery is around over \$4 billion, but that doesn't include expenditures on gas and travel, and all those types of things, which is included in that \$8 billion, so it's hard to compare.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I couldn't agree more. Even if you add a billion, it has to be \$5 billion at least for commercial; it's \$8 billion for the recreational. As a wise man once said, "A billion here and a billion there, pretty soon they're talking real money." Anyway, in terms of DFO's effort in terms of the work that you do, what percent of your effort is spent on the recreational fishery versus the commercial fishery, if you could speculate on that?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I would say two or three things.

Number one, it's difficult, and I said this in the remarks, to tease out what we actually do. In anticipation of today's discussion, we said, what do we spend on recreational fisheries? The challenge is when we do the science stock assessment for salmon, it supports both. We're not doing it for commercial or for recreational. So that's one. It's really hard to tease out: much of what we do supports both fisheries.

Number two, we have had a traditional focus on the commercial fishery in this department. The small craft harbour program is about commercial access, and that's traditionally where we've been. That hasn't fundamentally changed, recalling that most of the recreational fishery is managed by the provinces, but not all of it.

Number three, I would say it's growing. I would say that our focus on recreational fisheries has grown in recent years. The recreational fisheries conservation partner program, bringing into effect the fisheries protection program where we're working with recreational and angling groups and conservation groups in terms of rolling out the policy pieces, has got us closer to them. We're more connected to the Atlantic salmon, and to the Pacific Salmon Foundation, than we have been at any point in the past.

It is an issue that has grown, but I don't want to tell you that it has fundamentally changed the department's traditional focus.

One final point. The west coast has had a very active departmental engagement with the recreational groups, and it's growing on the east coast. Atlantic salmon, striped bass, others...we spend more and more of our time on that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: In terms of the coasts where the federal government has clear jurisdiction, can you provide a value of the recreational fishery versus the commercial fishery on both coasts?

• (1215)

Mr. Kevin Stringer: We'd have to get back to you. We do have statistics on the recreational fishery.

I think in terms of the commercial fishery, the figures that I gave you—around \$2 billion in landed value and \$4-point-something billion in terms of total value—that includes some commercial inland, but very little commercial inland. The freshwater fishery is about \$60 million, so it really is that.

I'm going to say this, and if I'm wrong we will get back to you, but it really is the coastal recreational fishery that is maybe 20% of the total amount. If you look at that list of the most fish caught, it really is walleye, perch, bass, pike, etc.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Let's talk about walleye in the inland fisheries. Back in the day, DFO used to do research on freshwater game fish. I participated in some of that work myself. Is that something that is possible, if there's a policy recommendation, that you could rekindle the work that people used to do on walleye, pike, and whitefish primarily, let's say, through the Freshwater Institute and other areas?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I'll speak a little bit to the question, and I'll ask Alain to speak a little bit about what we do in freshwater science right now.

It has often been a discussion with the provinces. As I said, fisheries is a federal jurisdiction. The reality is that we have formal and informal arrangements with provinces. Provinces, for the most part, certainly the Prairies and Ontario, have taken responsibility for managing the freshwater fisheries, and that has generally included any stock assessments and that sort of work.

That said, the department does do work on freshwater fisheries. I've had the opportunity to talk to the committee about some of the work we do on aquatic invasive species and other elements, but I'll ask Alain to add.

Mr. Alain Vézina: Yes, as Kevin said, it's very hard to tease out exactly what part is just for recreational fishery, but overall we estimate that we spend between \$45 million and \$50 million in people and operating and maintenance money, on research that directly or indirectly benefits recreational fisheries. So that's research on some assessments that we do for the Great Lakes and for the central and Arctic region where we have the mandate for the recreational fishery.

Some work is done on aquatic invasive species, animal health, and also the relationship between habitat loss and productivity in freshwater. We do a lot of work that contributes indirectly.

In addition, I can mention some specific projects that might be of interest here. We have one that was funded recently on striped bass in the Miramichi, where we're trying to look at the interaction between Atlantic salmon and the striped bass, which is a very key issue for the management of those fisheries. We're looking at genetic differentiation in the Atlantic salmon stocks to see where they come from when salmon are caught in a commercial fishery in Greenland. And we're also looking at telemetry, marking the salmon and trying to see where they go, and trying to estimate mortality at sea.

We're doing a lot of work here that benefits the recreational fishery.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: What I want to zero in on is that inland freshwater sport fisheries work. Mr. Stringer pointed out that the walleye is the number one fish in Canada. The fishery is worth hundreds of millions of dollars and under the recreational fisheries program, DFO is doing work that used to be provincial...which they just don't do. I can see a partnership developing utilizing DFO's research expertise to help provinces manage inland fish stocks better, specifically, the walleye. Could you speculate on that a little bit?

Mr. Alain Vézina: We have done some work on the walleye in British Columbia. We provided scientific advice back in 2010 on the walleye. When it fits our mandate, such as a species-at-risk issue, we do assessment work that can be of benefit. That's not the case for the walleye, of course.

Again, a lot of the responsibility is with the provinces. Some provinces, such as British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, already do a lot of research, so we're not going to duplicate that. We're going to work with them and we're also working a lot with watershed organizations to do that research.

• (1220)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, if you look at the case of Ontario where the walleye is king, we're talking about 922,000 sport fishing licenses, something worth hundreds of millions of dollars. I can guarantee that there are huge gaps in the information in the terms of walleye management in Ontario. Again, I think if it's a mandate thing, mandates can change. Working in partnership with provinces like Ontario to manage walleye better, which is the main recreational fish, wouldn't be a bad idea I think.

Mr. Alain Vézina: When we have the expertise to contribute, we will explore these partnerships. Yes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I think expertise is not the issue. You have it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Stringer and everybody else. It's good to have you here.

The ground fishery dates for Prince Edward Island changed a couple of years ago. Can you elaborate on that?

It's my understanding that it's different from the rest of the Atlantic region, and also that fishermen from the other Atlantic provinces can fish in the area where the island fishermen would fish. You can imagine how well that's accepted. Why is that the case?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I don't have with me the specific P.E.I. season. In terms of the general rules with respect to cod in the gulf region, it is pretty broad. There's not a license required but there are management rules depending on conservation. There's a limit of 15 per day or—this is ground fish generally—15 per day of which no more than 5 can be cod. There's no size limit. There's no license requirement. It has to be done by angling or handline. What I don't know is what the specific season is.

We can certainly get back to you on that.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: My understanding is that it used to start about July. Now it starts at Labour Day, and it's not a conservation issue from what I understand. I have been told that people are fishing in the waters, so that would not be overly accepted by fishermen.

Catch and release, of course, is a big issue in my area because of the tuna fishery. Has there been a large increase in that over the years?

I'd just like you to elaborate because there's some criticism of that, which I'm not part of. Can you elaborate on what the mortality rates are?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I'll start and maybe, Alain, I'll ask you to speak. I don't know if you know about mortality rates.

I think you're referring to the charter fishery for tuna, a really interesting development—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: It's big, and it can be a lot bigger.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I spoke in my opening remarks about new opportunities for the recreational fishery, about new developments, and about making sure that we're getting more economic value out of the fishery. There's no question that it would seem that the charter fisheries are not just for tuna. We're seeing it for lobster, for cod, and for other fisheries. We don't have a fully developed management regime for it yet. We have specific rules in all the different fisheries for it. The challenge is that it's not really a recreational fishery and it's not really a commercial fishery. It's something new, but it's certainly a tourist thing.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: It's a sport fishery.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Yes. We're still working on management rules for it.

That said, we have very strict management rules for the tuna fishery and the charter fishery. We have daily catch limits, limits on how many hookups you can have—those types of things. What we don't know is how much is charged by the individual tour operator; that's up to them. We see it as a significant opportunity and as a growth opportunity.

We are concerned. Catch and release is important. We have it in salmon, in tuna, in other fisheries. In the shark fishery we have catch and release requirements in different areas. The idea is that we're going to be able to conserve more of the resource if we catch and release and you are able to catch them again.

The challenge is that mortality rates are different for different species. With rockfish on the west coast, if you get them out of the water, they are done; it's not 100%, but there is a significant mortality rate. I don't know what it is for tuna; I know that for salmon it's quite low, so catch and release works well for salmon.

I'll ask Alain or Andrew to speak to tuna.

• (1225)

Mr. Alain Vézina: We did some research in collaboration with partners on the release mortality for tuna.

Mr. Andrew McMaster (Assistant Director, Aquaculture Policy and Regulatory Initiatives, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I will just elaborate a little on that P.E.I. charter fishery in regard to estimated costs; then I will touch on the mortality rate.

As Mr. Stringer has said, it's tough to pin down exactly how much is charged, but—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Excuse me. Could you also, when you're speaking to it, touch on enforcement and elaborate on how it is progressing, being a new fishery, and that type of thing?

Mr. Andrew McMaster: I'll turn the enforcement question back to my boss, but speaking on the values, we're looking at anywhere from \$1,250 to \$1,400 per trip that is charged by the charter operators; that's for a group of one to six people. Looking at that, you're looking at a gross revenue that has increased significantly since 2010 and up to 2013. The 2010 estimated gross revenue was just about \$100,000, and in 2013 about \$1.5 million. It's a significantly growing industry. The number of trips has grown significantly as well as the number of charter boat operators participating in it.

With regard to the mortality rate, we have a 10-tonne national allocation, which comes off the top of Canada's national allocation for bluefin tuna, that is applied to address any mortality in the fishery. The science estimates are, right now, that the mortality rate is just 3.4%, so it's quite low in respect to that hook and release fishery.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: That's very important, and I'm pleased to hear it.

Mr. Stringer, I appreciated your answer to my friend Mr. Sopuck. It's sometimes quite difficult to evaluate the value of the commercial fishery and the recreational or whatever you call the catch and release, because people fly in, rent hotel rooms—it is new money coming to an area. But we also have to keep our eye on the commercial fishermen, who have to survive too.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Commercial fishery continues to be a real focus for the department. There is no question that more value can come out of the recreational fisheries. Charter fishing is one thing we're certainly looking at and something on which we really look forward to the advice of this committee in your study, something that really is development.

Enforcement is a challenge in the recreational fishery. It's a challenge everywhere—I won't speak specifically to tuna fishery enforcement—but generally with respect to the recreational fishery. You have thousands of participants involved. We have very specific management rules, which I told you about, in lingcod and striped bass that is between 50 cm and 65 cm. There are 4,000 people out there on the Miramichi and in the southern gulf with their nets trying to figure that out. You only have one per day. We don't have an enforcement officer behind each tree watching them.

This is a challenge. It is something we continue to think about while looking for new ways to monitor. We require logbooks in the case of some of the bigger ones; input that comes back to the department or to the province at the end of the season. There are actually prizes and incentives to do it.

Enforcement does take place. I have some stats that I can share with you. For example, in the Newfoundland salmon fishery or in the Newfoundland recreational fishery writ large we had 250 violations in 2014. In 2013 there was 70,000 hours of enforcement by guardians and by RCMP officers. Charges were laid, warnings were given, there were 59 salmon nets seized, 109 salmon seized, and 11 boats seized. So there is action taken.

We also work with Crime Stoppers and we have Report a Poacher websites that we're developing as well. It is an interesting and challenging issue in both the charter operations but also the recreational fishery generally.

• (1230)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much.

I would add that I don't think you need to have a fisheries officer following the tuna boats because it's pretty basic and it is worth a lot of money and going to continue to grow. I'm certainly very pleased to hear the mortality rate is not high at all, which can be a concern.

In this whole area of recreational fisheries, we've done a fair bit on invasive species. Can you elaborate on the concerns you have and what species it will affect?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Aquatic invasive species seems to be the emerging issue in terms of fisheries protection.

In terms of fisheries protection, there are five physical threats to fisheries: overfishing is managed through deciding who gets a licence, etc.; pollution is managed through section 36; water flow is managed through section 20 of the Fisheries Act; habitat is managed through section 35 of the Fisheries Act. As for the invasive species, the changes to the Fisheries Act that we made in 2012 that Parliament passed now give us the authority to address invasive species, and we have a regulation that is currently undergoing formal consultation. What it will do when it is passed, presuming it's put into effect, is ban or prohibit the sale, transport, and possession of aquatic invasive species, and there's a list of what those species are. It will also give ministers, federal and provincial—and territorial if they want it—the tools to eradicate and address aquatic invasive species.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Will that also involve importing into the country or into a province? There's a big problem. People, if you're fully aware, do not really understand what they're doing with the invasive species.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: You can't import the aquatic invasive species under this piece into the country. Then there's the interesting issue of a species that happens to be native to the Prairies but not elsewhere. What do you do in those cases? That has been kind of interesting to develop because aquatic invasive species is to that watershed or to that ecosystem, so we've been working on that.

The one that everybody knows about that we are concerned about is Asian carp. That is a huge issue if they do get into the Great Lakes. We've been trying since 1955 to deal with sea lamprey. If we have to address Asian carp as well it will be a huge issue for commercial but also really for the recreational fisheries in the Great Lakes.

But there are others across the country such as some of the bass species in New Brunswick, tunicates, green crab, northern snake-heads. There are a number of species that we're concerned about that do have an impact on recreational fisheries as well as commercial.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Stringer.

Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I have three questions. I'm really glad you're here. We're doing a study that interests British Columbians and all Canadians, I think.

First I'm hoping my colleague, Mr. Sopuck, will close his ears for a minute. As a self-proclaiming author and one of the real proponents of this recreational fisheries program, I'm very proud of him and I really like the idea that individual MPs can really change our legislature and the world through an initiative like that, and we've all benefited. Congratulations to you, Mr. Sopuck.

My first question deals with the program. We've heard about the \$8 billion and we've heard about how the program has resulted in large-scale funding and about rehabilitation of recreational fisheries. My first question is this, and I'm going to go through all three. Is that the sole source of funding from DFO for recreational fisheries' habitat conservation?

My second relates to tourism, which is a huge source of revenue for our country and certainly for British Columbia. A west coast MP has to be concerned about fisheries and tourism. My question is, given the large number of foreign anglers—you mentioned 400,000 foreign anglers—do our fisheries and tourism departments work together? How do you think we could improve on that?

The third question is how important are our DFO scientists to recreational fisheries? There is a lab in west Vancouver often known as the DFO lab. In my opinion it has some great scientists there. Perhaps we can do better still in how we harness their ability and their expertise to promote our recreational fisheries.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I'll start on the first one and then I will ask Melinda to comment on what we do in terms of the recreational fisheries partnership program.

The first question was: Is that really the sole source of funding? I'll make two points. One is, part of our program is to require partnerships. For every dollar we raise or that we provide to a program, we're actually able to leverage an additional \$2.25 for the project. We have managed to partner—and I'll ask Melinda to speak to this—with hundreds of groups in terms of leveraging funds and volunteer hours, etc.

We also have other programs that address habitat restoration. Our salmonid enhancement program on the west coast in particular has a significant habitat restoration component to it.

The Pacific Salmon Foundation had an initial \$30-million grant but they also have the funds annually from the conservation stamp and we work with them on that in terms of habitat restoration.

Mr. John Weston: How much was that initial grant?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: The initial grant was \$30 million. The moneys they get from the conservation stamp is about \$1.2 million. It depends on how many people get the stamp per year. Then there is funding from the salmonid enhancement program.

There is a similar program on the east coast with the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation. Again, \$30 million was the initial amount of money they utilized.

There are some other programs. There is something called AFSAR. It's an aboriginal support program for habitat restoration for species at risk. There may be one or two others.

There are certainly a number of things we do, but the recreational fisheries partnership program has been a real focus for us in terms of developing partnerships, leveraging other funds, and doing some really important work.

Ms. Melinda Lontoc-Roy (Advisor, Fisheries Protection Program, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Just to follow up on some of the numbers that Mr. Stringer was sharing, if we're looking at the results from last year, 2013-14, where we funded 74 different organizations to run 94 projects, those 74 organizations partnered in turn with over 380 partners. The leveraging and the partnership aspects of this program are working well.

In addition to the volunteers, again for the same projects we had over 1,700 volunteers, separate from the partners who were volunteering their time.

Mr. John Weston: What is that number, again?

Ms. Melinda Lontoc-Roy: There were over 1,700.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: On tourism and fisheries, I can't tell you that I know of any formal relationship that we have with our colleagues at CTC. I think there is some opportunistic engagement but it's something that could probably be expanded. It's opportunistic because some of the people who work in our office used to work in the tourism office so they're connected. But in terms of a formal relationship, I don't think we have that strong a formal relationship. It is a really interesting thought, particularly as that's on the west coast.

Mr. John Weston: If I can interrupt, a round table on tourism that I co-chaired with Senator Nancy Greene Raine, has just produced a report on tourism through Deloitte's on how we can improve in this area. I think there are some real areas where through collaboration, your department and CTC could really achieve even greater outcomes.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Yes, that is very interesting..

Alain spoke about scientists. I'm going to give him the microphone again. What I can say is that on all of our fisheries—and I'm on the management side—we depend fundamentally on science. Our advice about how to manage, I would say, is a bigger challenge sometimes in the recreational fishery where it's hard to get good information about how much exactly was caught. It's a bit more difficult, but I'll ask Alain to comment.

• (1240)

Mr. Alain Vézina: You ask how important departmental scientists are in this enterprise and whether we could enhance that in some way.

Right now the DFO scientists are very key in many issues related to recreational fisheries, and I gave a few examples earlier, but I'll repeat that.

A lot of our work helps inform habitat issues relative to the recreational fisheries, animal health issues relative to the recreational fisheries and invasive species, so they are all critical pieces in order for people to manage and make decisions about recreational fisheries.

In terms of the direct assessment of the recreational fisheries, we do some work in areas where we have the primary responsibility like in the north and in some fisheries in the Great Lakes that are both commercial and recreational. We do the assessments there. Otherwise a lot of that research is done by the provinces.

We collaborate a lot with the provinces and with the watershed organizations. The DFO scientists are involved in partnerships to make sure we have the best possible science to inform people who make decisions about the recreational fisheries.

I think we're key. I just want to point out that we do have a couple of laboratories you didn't name that are really focused on freshwater science, like the Great Lakes laboratory in Sault Ste. Marie. All they do is freshwater science. Of course, we have the Freshwater Institute where there's still a lot of excellent freshwater science being done.

We play a key role, but we can't be alone in this enterprise. It's a very complex ecosystem. We're willing to work with partners even more, but we have some capacity issues. We can't be everywhere at once, so working with partners and developing relationships especially with watershed conservation, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and all that will really help improve the science.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you.

[*English*]

So we're good, and we can always be better. If we are to be the international centre for science for fisheries and the world leader, what would be two or three things you would like to see, for us to keep growing over the next 10 years, looking long range?

Mr. Alain Vézina: On the recreational scale?

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Weston: I'm talking about the science that includes recreational fishing.

Mr. Alain Vézina: That's a good question.

I think that exercising some leadership and assembling partners around critical issues is increasing our national and international visibility. We can play a leadership role in some very specific cases. That is mainly what I see. In terms of investment, we must instead look at how...

[*English*]

to better harness the resources that are there rather than try to drum up money ourselves so to speak.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to a three-minute round now, and we're going to start off with Mr. Cleary.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

In terms of recreational fisheries there are a lot of questions I could ask. I could ask questions about salmon. For example, why our salmon are leaving our waters, going out to sea, and not coming back from the sea. That's one of the questions, for example, that's been around for a dog's age. It just hasn't been answered. And trout jurisdiction. It goes on and on.

But I'm going to go back to recreational cod fisheries. One of the questions I asked you, Mr. Stringer, was about the 32 days in Newfoundland and Labrador. How does that compare to the Maritimes?

I know Mr. MacAulay asked you a question about P.E.I. Maybe for the benefit of the committee you can provide us with the times for all the recreational fisheries for all of the Atlantic provinces.

You don't have that number 32 comparison today?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: There's far more time than any other fishery, but I'll have the specifics, and we would be happy to provide that.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: I would appreciate that.

My quick question is this, because I want to turn it over to François. The two points you mentioned, Mr. Stringer, were codfish are still delicate in waters off Newfoundland and Labrador compared to the 1980s. You also mentioned how Newfoundlanders and Labradorians love to fish, and you're dead on the money about that.

But this restriction, restricting the fishery to two different times, 32 days, has put lives in jeopardy. Some would argue at home that it has actually cost lives in certain incredibly unfortunate circumstances.

Is there any movement in the department to open that up again in comparison to, say, the Maritimes?

•(1245)

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I think a member made the point that last year when we saw the weather challenges that we had...it was late September, right? There was an understanding that people were possibly going to be out and fishing in very difficult conditions and we didn't want to have an incentive for people to do it. I think you will find that's traditionally been an approach where we will ensure that, as much as possible, we'll adjust our rules on a case-by-case basis to address safety.

You'll have also seen that when we announce the fishery is going to open on this date, sometimes it doesn't open on that date because the weather's bad. We know that when we shoot the gun off that the fishery is about to start, everybody goes out regardless, so we will take those things into account. Safety is a huge issue when you have that many people out on the water. To be candid, it's one thing in inland areas where it's an issue, but it's different being out on a lake and on a river compared to being out at sea. Even if it's in Conception Bay, it's still out at sea. So we do take that seriously. We watch it carefully. We made the decision that was made last year and it's something we need to pay attention to.

The Chair: Mr. Leef.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a quick round.

I know we got this on the record in a previous committee and we did touch a little on it with some of the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program stats. I'm wondering if perhaps you could table as much information for the record as you have on the results of that, from the beginning to the present day.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I'll be happy to do that. What I can do is walk through a bit more of what Melinda was talking about, and the results that I think we spoke to previously I'll speak to again. They're the results that I think we have full results for, because we've done all the tabulations, etc. That was the first year of the program 2013-14.

Under the recreational fisheries partnerships program, \$3.1 million was spent. We had 74 different organizations, undertook 94 habitat restoration projects. In addition, with that \$3.1 million we leveraged an additional \$7.0 million that was brought to those same projects from partners. That's the 1:1.25 leverage ratio.

There were 380 partners involved in those 94 projects. There were 1,700 volunteers who donated their time in those projects and our estimation from their reports is that 2.4 million square metres and 2,000 linear kilometres of recreational fisheries habitat were restored, including restoring access.

Now, Melinda, I don't know if we have from 2014-15 or other projects....

But we will certainly provide you with anything we've got more recent than that.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Super.

Thank you very much.

The one thing I didn't note in the initial presentation is this. Is there any role and are there comments on the value of DFO's participation in the hunting and angling advisory panel?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I spoke a little about the important relationships that we've got with recreational and angling groups, and I mentioned a few of them. The hunting and angling panel's actually been one more important opportunity for us to connect with some of those groups. They are, for the most part, groups we've had ongoing relationships with.

It's been a very useful venue for us, certainly, for ministers, but also for senior staff and departmental officials to work with those groups. We've worked with them on a number of issues. We've had presentations and discussions with them on aquatic invasive species, on the recreational fisheries partnerships program, on our fisheries protection policy, and on our offsetting policy. There are a number of opportunities that we've had to work with the hunting and angling advisory panel.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Leef.

Monsieur Lapointe.

•(1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: *Le Journal de Montréal* published an article just last week that states the following:

There are salmon populations in 109 rivers in Quebec. According to the most recent report on the Atlantic salmon run in Quebec rivers, if nothing is done in the short term, this species will be in grave danger. For the Atlantic Salmon Federation, data on the wild Atlantic salmon run in Quebec rivers in 2014 present a situation that is in no way encouraging.

For a very large number of Quebec rivers, we are talking about a conservation threshold between 30% and 50% lower than what it should be. The article goes on to say that supporters of salmon consider that Fisheries and Oceans Canada should very quickly form an advisory council so that measures can be taken to save Atlantic salmon in Quebec.

I would like to hear your reaction to this situation, which I think is fairly worrisome.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: We are greatly concerned about the situation of salmon in Quebec and in the Atlantic provinces.

[*English*]

The minister has established the advisory committee. She has announced it, in any case. We are seeing reductions, particularly in the southern end of the range. I should point out again that it's the Province of Quebec that establishes the rules in Quebec. We establish the management regime elsewhere in Atlantic Canada, but we work closely with Quebec, and Quebec representatives will be connected to the committee to make sure that we have a "pan" approach with respect to those things.

They're being asked to look at issues around predation, mortality at sea, habitat situations, habitat assessment, at whether we have the right management rules in place.... It's a complex set of issues that we need to look at. There are hundreds of individual runs on different rivers from Labrador to Newfoundland to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I., and Quebec. They all have unique circumstances. We have counting fences and we have what we call index rivers. We're able to see trends from year to year on many of them. We're seeing some signs that really concern us as well; hence the establishment of this committee.

What the minister has asked this group to do is to look at those issues, at what the historical trend has been, what the science tells us and does not tell us, what questions we still have to ask, what the issues are around predation, around seals, around striped bass—those types of things—and then provide advice to the minister on further research but also on management measures. Should we move to catch and release everywhere for a period of time? Should we be closing some rivers? What management measures should we be taking?

The department is taking it seriously. Last year we decreased the retention numbers; in other words, you can't catch and keep fish in many areas in which we used to have retention. We closed a couple of rivers that were previously opened. Part of it is what we need to do from a management perspective and part of it is what we need to do to make sure that this is healthy long term and that we have a healthy salmon fishery for the next generations. They are looking at both of those things, and the department is intimately involved.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

And thanks once again for being here with us.

I just have one question, and it is regarding the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program as well. Could you explain in a little greater detail the eligibility requirements of this and whether they have been changed at all since it was introduced?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I'm going to ask Melinda to speak to that. She's running the program.

Ms. Melinda Lontoc-Roy: In terms of eligible recipients, the program is limited to recreational fishing and angling groups as well as conservation organizations. In terms of eligible activities, the project must actively restore recreational fisheries habitat; that's open to both physical habitat restoration as well as chemical manipulations that will result in benefits to the habitat.

The third criterion is that there's a stacking limit of 75% and a federal cash limit of 50% meaning that we contribute to a broader project, and a maximum of half of the value of that project can come from the federal government and a maximum of 75% of the project value can come from federal, provincial, and municipal governments together.

So the three eligibility criteria are the eligible recipients that I listed, the eligible activities—the physical habitat restoration or chemical manipulation—as well as the funding requirements.

• (1255)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Has that remained constant since the onset?

Ms. Melinda Lontoc-Roy: There has been one change. When the program was first designed, the stacking limit—the maximum contribution from all level of governments together—was at 50%. That limit has increased to 75%, and the cap at 50% remains for federal dollars only.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: That was something that was really a request of the people who are using the program.

I should also mention that we're coming to the end of the first couple of years of this program and are doing an assessment of it. Do we have the funding right, the types of projects right, and are all the eligibility requirements that Melinda just spoke to basically right, or are there adjustments needed? We'll be working with the stakeholders on that assessment and certainly look forward to the advice of this committee in your study, which may assist us as well.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Davidson.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have just two questions, and you can handle them if you like.

First of all, can you tell me what sort of legislative, regulatory, or policy guidelines DFO has in place to be able to determine how the recreational catch should relate to, for example, commercial or first nations requirements? Do we have that kind of guideline? How is that process conducted to decide who gets what?

Second, conventional wisdom would seem to indicate that it's harder to monitor what the recreational fishermen and women do. How do we do that so that we have some sense of what they're catching, and are able to make sure that sustainable practices are being carried out?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Managing the recreational and commercial fisheries together, and figuring out how they connect, and what portion goes to which is a challenge. I would say it's been more of an issue on the west coast than on the east coast, generally. I would also say that we have more of a formal integration of our processes for providing advice to the minister and the department from stakeholders on the west coast than we do on the east coast. For salmon and other west coast species—but salmon in particular—we have an integrated harvest committee that has commercial, recreational, and aboriginal representation. We try to have those groups come together and sort out, at those tables, how we're going to manage the overall fishery issues about shares. But as you point out, other issues are addressed in those fora.

We tend not to have that on the east coast. On the east coast, there is a pretty well-established process for how we address Atlantic salmon. There is an established process for how we address striped bass, recently established because it has just come back, but we don't have those integrated harvest tables.

In terms of a framework, we do have a formal framework. We actually have an operational policy with respect to how we manage recreational fisheries. It is from 2001. It hasn't been refreshed for a while. I don't think some of the things we've talked about today are reflected in it, such as charter fisheries, derbies, and those types of things which are new, emerging, and certainly growing.

To be candid, I would say it is sometimes hit-and-miss in terms of how we address it on the east coast.

Monitoring is an issue. Whereas, on the west coast you have 300,000 recreational license holders, we're not getting 300,000 responses, nor are we seeking them. We have to be strategic and tactical in terms of how we do that. It means working with lodges because they account for a significant part of it. It means working with the sports fish advisory board and the SFI, the Sport Fishing Institute, to come up with new, innovative ways to monitor. There have been a couple of tests out there in the past couple of years, on the west coast in particular, to be able to monitor.

We have creel surveys. Creel surveys are basically a conservation and protection officer, or a fisheries officer, or someone from the department sitting down with individual fishermen and asking how much they caught that day, how much they caught that week, and addressing those types of things. We have a number of mechanisms, and then we have our five-year survey, which tells us what's happening and gives us the trend. All of that goes into scientific advice. But monitoring is a challenge, and it is one that we continue to work on.

• (1300)

The Chair: Mr. Stringer, I'd like to thank you and your colleagues for appearing here today. We certainly do appreciate your comments and the time you took to answer our questions.

There being no further business, this committee now stands adjourned.

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