

Stuck In The Mud

It may not be mud. If it doesn't smell like mud, look like mud and taste like mud, it just might wind up being something a lot less desirable, even though mud in itself isn't that desirable. It may stick to your rug and you will never get rid of the smell, let alone the bad taste in your mouth.

I keep hearing that if we don't accept IVQ's, that our industry is doomed. This may be so, but many will be doomed regardless. I also keep hearing that there are no other solutions. It is also evident that the powers that be, some of which shouldn't be, will not give other solutions a moment of contemplation. I have made suggestions in the past and the first hole that can be punched in a theory is cause for total discard. Believe me, Integrated Groundfish Management under the present proposal is full of holes and is still flying. So I thought to myself, and then said to myself, (I have to talk to someone with a little common sense once in a while), Make another proposal. Let industry look at it and see if they like it and find it less scary than the present one.

I will ask, "what if we put ZN licenses on an individual quota based on a combination of 1/3 equal division, 1/3 vessel length and 1/3 recent catch history." This is consistent with historical policy and is also consistent with the dependency of the participants in the ZN fishery. We have no directed ZN fishery in the first year of inception. Those that participate in other fisheries such as halibut sablefish, or dogfish etc. have a no discard policy, and must bring in all rockfish, all of which are relinquished. A handling fee of 7 cents a pound is paid to the vessel. The cost of camera and our observer coverage is paid out of the sale of this relinquished fish. The fish is then sold to a different buyer than that which is buying the targeted species to prevent hanky panky with prices on rockfish. There is no incentive but rather disincentive as there is no

benefit to the fisher in retaining Rockfish. Then the money received for the relinquishment is paid to the ZN license holder based on his percentage, of his quota, for each species. If or when the TAC on each species is reached than it becomes sciences quota that is being fished and they will receive the payment for any overage above the TAC, which would go towards further research.

Though science may not approve of the fact that the TAC has been exceeded, one has to question that, if they are in fact being caught, then they are there. We have enough protected areas to preserve the species.

In the second year if there is a surplus of some TAC, that did not get caught in a given species, the ZN license holders would be provided an opportunity to harvest that surplus as a directed fishery. If a license holder decided not to fish his surplus, it could be put back in the pot of any surplus for the next year and be again divided among the ZN license holders. No leasing, either fish it or put it back in the pot.

The cost effectiveness of this is that it would probably require little more than one person to market this product and to produce a spreadsheet that would spell out the distribution of the funds collected through relinquishments.

The result of this would be minimum cost, minimum administration, maximum dollar to the quota holder, minimum cost to crew, and no uncertainty to what the cost of obtaining quota might be under the proposed system. It will likely be more than the fish is worth.

This could be applicable to all fisheries, and all by-catch. The incentive that exists under this framework would be that each participant would try to produce a quality product to provide one another the best possible value for the others fish. Each quota

holder would have no expenses associated with the production and would receive the best value for their quota.

There have been a number of articles, some of which I have written myself, criticizing concentration of fishing opportunities, leasing, and a long standing advisory process that allows those that support this concentration, a form for promoting or lobbying further concentration, but what is also important is the inability of many of the fisherman to borrow funds to purchase, quota, as the lending institutions, will not fund licenses or quota purchases.

In the issues around native reserves for example, where there is no individual ownership of property, the government provides funding through a special opportunity fund, for individuals to build on this property. The government could and should provide the same financial opportunity to fishermen who in essence are in the same situation. They don't own the resource, but have only the privilege of the right of harvest. This funding opportunity could provide a vehicle for redistributing the concentration of quota over time. If the leasing of quota and or the cost of leasing quota could be established that was fair to those that harvest, the cost of a pound of quota would be reestablished relative to the value of the product rather than the inflated value based on need and greed.