

Agenda Item C.6.d
Supplemental Public Comment
March 2004

SALMON TROLLERS MARKETING ASSOCIATION
FORT BRAGG, CALIFORNIA
BENJAMIN PLATT F/V KAY BEE

Dear Sirs,

My name is Ben Platt. I speak to you today on behalf of the Salmon Trollers Marketing Association of Fort Bragg, California. My purpose here is not to argue, point fingers, or beg. My mission is to present compelling reasons why the Council must see clear to grant a viable commercial salmon troll season this year. By "viable", I mean one we can live with; that is, a season with enough months on the ocean in areas where there are traditionally schools of salmon at that time of year. We are at a critical time in the management of West Coast fisheries. This year, the very future of the commercial salmon fishing industry hangs in the balance. I believe the Council can reach a decision, which protects both the fish and the fisherman.

I am a full-time commercial fisherman. I hold California and Oregon Salmon permits on my boat, the 'Kay Bee'. I earn eighty percent of my income from salmon trolling and support a family of four. My father, Buzz Platt, was a salmon fisherman for many years, and later in life served a long term on your own Groundfish Advisory Panel. My brother, Dan Platt, is also a full-time fisherman and very active in advocating for Fort Bragg's fisheries. My uncle, John Hurwitz, now fishes out of Half Moon Bay, California and writes a column for "Pacific Fishing" magazine. My mother, Printha Platt, is still active in Noyo Women for Fisheries. Our family is not atypical in this industry. We are part of a long tradition of men and women who not only make our living from the sea, but also actively steward and protect the ocean's resources. We are loud champions of sustainable fisheries, mainly because we wish to harvest from the sea for generations to come.

The current crisis facing our salmon fishery is not a crisis of over-use, it is a crisis of management. It follows, in my mind, that better management can alleviate the crisis.

Every year, we trollers buy our licenses and permits. At the appointed time, we drive our boats to the designated areas, we lower the proper number of lines into the water, complete with barbless hooks. We release the fish under the size limit and keep the ones of the correct size and species. We primarily target the healthy salmon runs of the vast Central Valley System. This river system is thriving, by the way, in no small measure, due to the active involvement of concerned fishermen along its long journey back to health. Many smaller coastal rivers and streams have also been helped back to life by the involvement of fishermen. In Mendocino County, we have been restoring habitat for over fifty years. We help support hatcheries through license fees and taxes. We initiated and self-paid for a successful trucking project of the Sacramento River to bring baby salmon down stream. In Fort Bragg, we have held the "World's Largest Salmon BBQ" for over thirty years, raising thousands of dollars every year for habitat restoration. In short, we did all this because we were led to believe that our livelihood depended upon it.

Over the last decade or so, West Coast and Alaska salmon fisherman have spent millions of our own dollars to promote wild salmon on the market. In my own state, fishermen pay two cents a pound to the Salmon Council, our own advocacy group. We have pressured and educated our fellow fishermen to deliver the highest quality troll-caught salmon in the world. We now garner strong demand for our fish.

In the last two seasons we have even begun to receive decent compensation at the unloading dock. I would not be reaching far to state that California Wild King Salmon is one of the most sought-after foods in the country today.

We have waged a long battle to regain healthy stocks, reasonable seasons, and a strong niche in the seafood market. We will not easily give it up. Unfortunately, our numbers have been whittled-down by attrition, mainly as a result of progressively more restrictive fishing regulations. The full-time fishermen and women of today are the survivors of an industry under siege. We continue in our chosen life under great odds because we believe in what we do; this is our American Dream. In this belief we are stubborn and resolute.

I would like to tell you about my port. Three years ago, it looked like Noyo Harbor was on the mend. That year, we were allowed to troll almost four months north of Point Arena. All of a sudden Noyo was alive again, with boat coming and going, unloaders working into the night at once abandoned hoists; long lines at the fuel dock, ice plant and gear stores. That year, we had near record landings and the town enjoyed the infusion of salmon money. The Council's own study, which can be found in the Review Of 2005 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, page 102 (Feb. '06), show personal income impacts in Fort Bragg from the 2003 season of over \$13 million dollars. That's a lot of money into a town of just over six thousand people. In contrast, last year's season, with only one month of commercial fishing allowed in September, resulted in impacts of only \$2.6 million dollars. The main difference was three months less of fishing opportunity.

It is no wonder that Noyo Harbor is deteriorating once again. Without salmon, what is left? The federal buyback program has drastically reduced the trawl fleet. The urchin/dive fishery is nearly gone. The near shore rock cod fishery has been nearly regulated out of existence. We have zero opportunities for hook and line shelf and slope rockfish. We are not a high producing crab port due to limited grounds. The open-access blackcod fishery, intended for drop-in participation, is becoming crowded and will surely overcrowd this summer in the event of no salmon fishing. The fuel dock has been for sale for over a year with no offers forthcoming. The ice plant keeps its door open only through subsidy from the trawler's association. There is only one major buyer left, Caito Fisheries. One more year without salmon fishing opportunity and the infrastructure of Noyo will crumble. My port is dying.

There are important issues on the Klamath/Trinity river system which must be addressed or we will face this dilemma again and again, if there are any of us left. Somehow we must return clean, cool water flows to the river, consistently. Our goals are healthy rivers and a sustainable fishery. In the meantime, we will need reasonable ocean troll seasons or the industry will continue to collapse. We especially need a reasonable season this year, since last years' was already drastically reduced. I believe that it is in the best interests of all involved, including the fish, to allow salmon fisherman to continue to be involved in all aspects of this fishery. But first, we must be allowed to fish, or we will not be around to help.

I hope that I have helped provide a human aspect to this debate. I hope that by seeing the real affects of salmon regulations on one port, you will see clear to provide a real season this year. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Ben Platt

MORRISON:

“But I didn’t give my consent”

Focus groups use the “Delphi Technique” to guide group discussions.

By Joyce Morrison

Reprinted with permission of
The Illinois Leader
<http://www.illinoisleader.com>

The old saying, “Divide and conquer!” is not new with moms. They are constantly dividing their kids to keep them from plotting and fighting so they can “control” them better. Mom already knows the outcome, but she “lets” the kids have an input.

At the same time, she is manipulating them into thinking the decision was their idea. Mothers were the first skilled facilitators – and they should be the first to identify their techniques used on them at “public forums.”

“But I don’t want to be split up from my friend. We came together and we want to sit together.” That is my first thought when going to a public meeting where we are made to number off and be herded into small discussion groups.

They explain, we are “helping them” by utilizing a new concept in decision-making. We are then given our own facilitator who smiles and treats us like we are really important. We even get coffee and cookies.

The group at each table will compile their thoughts and feelings about this community plan. We get to put down likes and dislikes. We are, in reality, being “assessed” – they couldn’t care less about our likes and dislikes. The feedback from all the groups is in writing and analyzed to determine “where they are now” as a whole.

A following discussion will narrow the likes and dislikes to two or three items the group thinks are most important.

The facilitator is establishing a

framework to move people from “where they are” to “where they want them to be.”

The outcome, or goal, has already been predetermined, so it does not matter what you think. You will feel very foolish questioning what is happening. They have already twisted around everything you have said.

This is called a “paradigm shift.”

You are then moved away from decisions made by elected and/or public officials who should be accountable for their decisions. You are made to think this is a “public forum” meeting, and community participation that will decentralize the decision-making – and you are an important participant.

But remember, the outcome has been predetermined: You are only occupying a chair.

Now they must make the groups “adaptable to change.” The facilitation process utilizes up to nine basic steps to remove you from absolutes. Right and wrong become situational, or a matter of perception.

Since a consensus of the groups is the goal, it moves along with facilitators trained in group dynamics to ensure the outcome.

Dissenters are skillfully handled. Opinions are smoothly moved into “their interpretation” and come out nothing like what you have said.

There is a name for consensus-attaining. It is called the “Delphi Technique,” and most people have no idea they have been manipulated, or the fact they have participated in a “conditioning.”

The consensus process is “covert authority” – the same authority that undergirds socialist/communist regimes that justify their existence and governance structure in the collective authority of the people.

“In the [former] Soviet Union, a consensus circle is known as “a soviet.”

“The religion of socialist/communist regimes is humanism....”

The above is a quote from Lynn Stuter’s, “American Citizens Need to Know about Consensus and Facilitation.”

Most meetings have votes and minutes. Notice this is not being done at the “public forum” you have participated in.

There will be no voting and no minutes available for follow-up. All that is available is the “consensus” of the group.

Lynn Stuter’s article says people should educate themselves.

“When participating in public meetings, insist that they be run by Roberts Rules of Order – no consensus circles. It is the elected officials and those accountable to the elected officials who should be held accountable for decisions made. Pressure legislators to return to the limited form of government established by our Constitution and Bill of Rights. Such a government limits itself to addressing those structures over which it is given specify authority.

Push for judicial reform that removes from the judiciary the right to legislate via interpretations of law that hold no basis in the Constitution.”

(Published in 1997, Stuter’s article may be read online at www.icehouse.net/lmstuter/acf004.htm)