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Chair

Mr. Scott Simms

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone.

Welcome back to our study of marine protected areas. Today our meeting will be two hours. The first hour will be with our guests. I'll get to them in just a few moments.

During the second hour we're going to discuss several topics that we have to address, including the mission that we're going to be doing to western Canada, plus we're going to discuss the planning stage of the east coast trip for the fall, and a few other things you may want to bring up. Bear that in mind, because we have a substantial amount of time for committee business, so anything you want to bring up at that time, we'll talk about it then. That's an hour from now.

In the meantime we do have two very special guests this morning as we continue our study on marine protected areas.

First of all, before I get to that, I always like to introduce our special guests.

[Translation]

Jean-Claude Poissant is here with us.

Welcome, sir.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Good morning.

The Chair: We are pleased to welcome him.

I would like to mention that he represents the riding of La Prairie.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: That's right.

The Chair: Congratulations.

Once again, welcome.

[English]

We also would like to thank, from the Sport Fishing Institute of British Columbia, first of all, the executive director, Mr. Owen Bird. We also have, from the Sport Fishing Advisory Board associated with the Sport Fishing Institute, Gerry Kristianson.

We normally give 10 minutes to each group or individual. We're going to give you 10 minutes. You would like to split that time, is that correct?

Mr. Owen Bird (Executive Director, Sport Fishing Institute of British Columbia): We have presentations that will probably equal about 10 minutes, maybe slightly over.

The Chair: We'll call it five minutes each or thereabouts. How's that?

Mr. Owen Bird: Sure.

The Chair: You can take your time because you're the only two witnesses we have today. Who is starting first?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson (Chair, Sport Fishing Advisory Board, Sport Fishing Institute of British Columbia): I'll start.

The Chair: Mr. Kristianson, please proceed for 10 minutes or less.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Be generous, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I thought I was being generous.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I know these gentlemen. They're good people.

The Chair: You know these gentlemen. All right.

Have you met Mr. Sopuck? I guess you know Mr. Sopuck well. Very good then.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Now you've just prejudiced this whole—

The Chair: No kidding. According to Mr. Sopuck, I'm going to be extremely generous. Carry on ad nauseam.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Perhaps I should explain the relationship. I'm chair of the Sport Fishing Advisory Board, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' primary recreational fishing advisory body on the west coast, and in fact, is the oldest advisory body of DFO. It has been in existence for over 50 years and is a bottom-up organization with local committees in 23 communities, who send representatives to two regional boards, who in turn send representatives to the main board. I'm the elected chair of the main board. It's composed both of individual members and what one might call "institutional members".

The Sport Fishing Institute is an institutional member, as is the B. C. Wildlife Federation, the Steelhead Society, and a variety of others. I also sit on the board of the SFI, and the SFI sits on my board. It's a fairly close relationship of organizations in British Columbia.

As background to my comments this morning, I do want to say that no part of government of which I'm aware—and I'm a political scientist by training—deserves as much credit as the Pacific region of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, for its diligence in consulting with those affected by its decisions, whether they be representatives of aboriginal, recreational, or commercial harvesters, or those championing conservation interests. Committees representing the sometimes divergent interests are consulted on the region's integrated harvest planning processes for salmon, groundfish, pelagic species, and invertebrates.

I have personal experience on the advisory boards for salmon, halibut, tuna, prawn, and groundfish, as well as the processes established to provide advice on the development of protected areas. It's in that capacity that I appear before you today.

I appear because I'm anxious to ensure that as the government proceeds with its promise to protect 5% of coastal marine areas this year, and moves on to protect 10% by 2020, it does so in a manner that continues to provide those affected by its decisions the opportunity to participate in the selection and designation process in a meaningful way, and does not encourage or facilitate end runs around transparent, knowledge-based consultation.

I offer two examples of what I mean. In my role as one of the three SFAB representatives on the Groundfish Integrated Advisory Board, I had the opportunity to provide input for the creation of the glass sponge reefs marine-protected area in Hecate Strait. A GIAB working group composed of commercial, recreational, and environmental interests worked long and hard to provide the department with a set of consensus recommendations. We were not initially successful in reaching agreement on the best way to protect these unique structures, while allowing fisheries to continue in ways that did not have an adverse impact. Two alternative proposals ultimately went forward to DFO's scientists and managers for consideration and analysis.

The department then responded with a compromise that seemed to be satisfactory to all interests, since no one at that consultative table opposed it, thereby satisfying the department's definition of consensus. The terms of that proposal were circulated in *Canada Gazette*, part I. At that point, however, one of the interests that had been part of the consensus chose to mount a web-based letter-writing campaign, which prompted the department to craft a substantially different set of rules for publication in *Canada Gazette*, part II.

Similarly, as a participant in the groundfish process, I was part of the process initiated by Environment Canada with respect to the protection of bird wildlife in the area of the Scott Islands, off the northern tip of Vancouver Island, by means of a national wildlife marine area. In this case, we were urged to put forward consolidated advice. We worked hard and achieved a consensus to support establishment of the conservation area on the assurance that it would not have an adverse impact on current aboriginal, recreational, and commercial fisheries. We were told by Environment Canada that current fishing activities would still be consistent with the purpose of the area. I note that the Scott Islands page on Environment and Climate Change Canada's website says that "Current scientific evidence suggests that no-take areas that prohibit all commercial and recreational fishing are not necessary to meet the conservation objective for the proposed Scott Islands...[national wildlife area]."

Unfortunately, despite the fact that it is clear that fishing activities have not impacted the birds' foraging species, such as euphausiids and sand lance, an effort is now under way to upset the original evidence-based conclusion and consensus. A web-based letter writing campaign has been aimed at imposing no-take zones on recreational, commercial and, presumably, aboriginal harvesters.

● (0850)

Against the background of these examples, I urge the committee to help both departments—Environment, and Fisheries and Oceans—to ensure that measures are in place to avoid having the consensus-based recommendations developed by formal departmental advisory bodies undermined by public relations campaigns. My sector wants transparent and evidence-based decision-making, although I hasten to point out that if government decides to begin basing its decisions on the volume of mail it receives, my recreational fishing constituency, which is composed of 300,000 tidal water licence holders in British Columbia, is more than capable of engaging in that kind of activity. We don't want to do that. We think it's the wrong approach, but if needs must, the devil drives.

That's the fundamental point I wanted to make with you today.

I do want to touch briefly on one other aspect of the process, which I think you need to be thinking about. That is that the planning process for these marine protected areas in British Columbia, and for other aspects of fisheries management, have incorporated a new paradigm on the west coast, and I suspect elsewhere in Canada. That is, the process begins with what are called by first nations, "tier 2" processes. That involves first nations talking to other governments, federal and provincial, and attempting to reach an accommodation, agreement and so forth. But in that process, the difficulty is that non-aboriginal Canadians don't become part of that discussion until after the tier 2 process has ended. What that means is that government, it seems to me, is put in an invidious position. If it wants to change the decisions it has made with first nations, it's then seen as betraying the good faith negotiations of the tier 2 process. On the other hand, from the point of view of those of us who were not in the room for tier 2, we are obviously not happy if we're then told, "Well I'm sorry, we reached this agreement."

There is another way to do this, and I again speak as a member of a process in British Columbia aimed at bringing about pretty substantial change to the way we manage Chinook salmon. It's one of the most serious conservation management problems we face. In that case, that process began with a tier 2 process between first nations and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. At the suggestion of a wise first nations leader in Fraser Valley, Ken Malloway, who was co-chair of the process with DFO, the recreational sector, the commercial sector, and the environmental sector were invited to be part of the tier 2 process.

We've now been involved in that for about two years. It's going forward in a very satisfactory way, where people feel that they understand what's happening and are not being excluded from the process. I simply flag it here today as what I think is a preferred way to go forward, and one that takes into consideration all of these new marine protected areas on the west coast. I suggest that if we don't follow that kind of process, we're simply inviting unnecessary confrontation when decisions get made at one level and are then challenged or required to be modified at another level.

I thank you for your consideration today, and I am happy to answer any questions once my colleague has spoken.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kristianson. We appreciate that.

Mr. Bird, for five to 10 minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Owen Bird: Thank you, too, for the opportunity to comment on MPA development on the Pacific coast.

Gerry has framed our organizations and the relationship between the SFAB and the SFI, but I'll expand on that. I appear in my role as executive director of the Sport Fishing Institute of B.C. The institute has been in existence since 1980. We're a non-profit society. Members are made up of a wide range of committed stakeholders, including fishing lodges, resorts, certified tidal angling guides, hotels, small communities, and businesses. We represent the interest of those businesses, individuals, and the angling public they serve.

I provide comment today based on my role, but also on my personal experience as a lifelong coastal B.C. resident and angler.

It should come as no surprise to members of the committee that British Columbians value their coastal environment. Witness the public reaction to a small bunker fuel spill in Burrard Inlet in 2015 and a larger diesel spill near Bella Bella in 2016 if you want a sense of how people feel. But it would be a mistake to assume that marine protection and responsible access to the bounty of the coast are mutually exclusive.

British Columbians are fiercely protective of our orca populations, but woe betide the government that tries to ban whale-watching.

The same is true for the MPA process. We want our coast protected from serious threats, but we also want to continue to enjoy responsible access to resources and fisheries that support the economies of the local communities.

While I know some might suggest that sport fishing is incompatible with conservation, that reveals a lack of understanding of the work that our sector and DFO have engaged in for more than a decade. We've taken steps to ensure that local values are protected through rockfish conservation areas and refuge. The target species of the recreational sector are primarily salmon and halibut. Our impacts are low when they should or must be, and always less than commercial and many first nations fisheries.

We also need to be aware that there is more than one process at work on the coast. The provincial MaPP process has been very successful in engaging first nations in marine planning, but that process has not included equal access to other groups. More

importantly, it was not informed by data generated by groups who were, at best, peripheral to the process and not suited to provide information from all stakeholders. MaPP makes recommendations on issues that are well outside provincial jurisdiction, potentially impacting fisheries that are clearly regulated by the federal government.

I ask that the committee carefully consider what happens if the MPA process removes areas of the coast from resource production. In the simplest terms, we welcome the MPA process, but must acknowledge why it is being considered in the first place. Canada could protect all of the values it outlines as its goal under the MPA process, simply by enforcing its existing environmental protection and fisheries laws, but that lacks the public cachet of a marine protected area. We understand the political realities of this.

In developing this additional form of conservation that is new—at least to the west coast—we simply ask that you not exclude activities like sport fishing, which are so intrinsic to the coast in the first place. Protect the areas so that people can go and enjoy them responsibly. Once they have enjoyed them, spending a day fishing with family or enjoying the environment, they will know that a given area is worth protecting in the first place.

If too much of the coast or ill-chosen areas of it are turned into a quasi museum, then they will exist only in photographs or as areas of escape for the very wealthy few, and won't allow the benefits and values of the coast to be understood.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bird. We thank both of you for coming in and providing your expertise, as well as your experiences.

By the way, I didn't realize that the yours is the oldest advisory board of the DFO. Is that correct?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes. It's the longest-established advisory process.

The Chair: That's pretty interesting. Very good.

We're going to go to our first round for questions.

The first one is by Mr. McDonald, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for appearing here today.

What would be the value of your industry or sector to the local economy, the provincial economy, and the Canadian economy?

One of you or both of you can answer it, if you wish.

Mr. Owen Bird: We may both want to chime in.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: You go ahead.

Mr. Owen Bird: The tidal waters fishery in British Columbia is valued at approximately \$630 million annually. Recreational fishing in B.C. fresh and salt water is approximately \$936 million annually. That's based on numbers from the 2010 national recreational fisheries survey and a provincial study in 2012. We would anticipate that number would probably increase in the 2015 data that we're anxiously awaiting from the national recreational fisheries survey.

Across Canada, the values are more in the order of \$8.3 billion. This is a number that has recently been quoted by the Minister of Fisheries. So sport fishing is an incredibly important part of the social and economic fabric of the country. Of note—and it's not to devalue it or place any more importance on sport fishing over the commercial fishery—is that the commercial fishery is valued somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$5.8 billion or \$6 billion, just to give you a sense of the values there.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I might add that in British Columbia, the number that Owen has cited accounts for just over 50% of the total GDP value of all fisheries. Based on 15% of halibut and 10% to 12% of salmon, the recreational fishery actually has a GDP value now that is greater than all other fisheries, including aquaculture, combined.

Those other fisheries are enormously important—not to denigrate their importance—but those are the relative numbers.

Mr. Ken McDonald: As well, Mr. Kristianson, you mentioned that the consultation process has been really good with the various departments and with your group. Somewhere along the way it fell off the rails, whereby you said groups thought that everything was fine and everybody had accepted a consensus, but then some sort of letter-writing campaign changed the outcome afterwards. Could you expand on that and exactly how it went?

• (0905)

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: As I said, I credit the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, on the Pacific coast where I have more experience, with attempting diligently to give its various stakeholders an interest, for them to be able to put forward their views.

The difficulty that it has confronted is twofold. First, we live in a new world where different means of communication are now available. Secondly, though, government obviously has an obligation to listen to the public as opposed to listening to the consultative processes that it creates in order to give particular interests input. To me, it's the issue of how you balance that.

Particularly in the case of the Hecate Strait glass sponge reef, the issue was how wide and how high, and how the protection area should be designed. Everyone in the groundfish integrated advisory process wanted that protection to take place.

The argument by the commercial fishing sector—and I'm happy to support them in this circumstance—was that they came forward with a lot of evidence to show that there were ways in which commercial harvesting could continue to take place adjacent to the sponge reefs without damaging the reefs, the issue being the bottom being stirred up, allowing the bottom sediment to drift onto the reef and damage these quite precious structures. As I said, the problem was that the accepted consensus in the *Canada Gazette*, part I, then disappeared because the government felt it necessary to take into account this additional information.

I understand that government has to take into account all of the information it receives. I'm hoping for some kind of a balance. If you take away from us.... I'm a volunteer and I get paid nothing for my activity, but I devote a lot of time to these processes, as do others, and it's a bit hurtful when all the work you've put into it disappears because somebody else appears to be better at generating Internet-based letters than you were.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Perhaps the two of you can answer this: if there were any one or two recommendations from you at the committee today that we could put forward in this study, what would you want to see included?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Let me have a first cut at it.

I would like the committee to consider carefully the definitions that are going to be used to define protected areas, and I'll cite one example.

Through a very detailed process, we established a large number of rockfish conservation areas on the west coast. These are areas in which all recreational fishing has been banned, and all commercial fishing, with some exceptions of things that don't touch the bottom and affect these areas where rockfish congregate. If you added those areas to the total, I think you would be well over the stated percentage for the west coast already.

The difficulty is that you can't add them because they don't meet the strict definition that has been applied to what a protected area is. The reason is that first nations still have access to those areas. You can't stop first nations from fishing in those areas, because they are defined as areas of abundance. If they were areas of no abundance, then conservation measures could be applied.

I'm not suggesting that any interference with first nations' rights take place here. What is needed is a negotiation that ensures that those areas can be defined as protected areas and therefore become part of the total, as opposed to trying to find other areas to add in order to meet a percentage requirement.

Mr. Owen Bird: I wrote down "thoughtful definition of the area" just as Gerry began to speak, so I would just echo what Gerry said.

I guess another recommendation would be to be very careful about restricted access in developing these areas, whatever they may be, and that the idea of a preservationist approach be very carefully tread upon.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Thank you.

I'm good, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McDonald.

Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I have a comment on what Mr. Kristianson just said. Just because an area has abundance, it doesn't mean aboriginal take is allowed. In most national parks the big game is very abundant, but there is no aboriginal take in most southern parks. I think this can be dealt with.

Gerry, you talked about 300,000 participants in tidal-water fishing. What's the impact of recreational fishing on the fish resource in the tidal waters of B.C.? I'm talking about the percentage of the harvest and what the take is.

• (0910)

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: They—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Also, how does it relate to the commercial and aboriginal harvest?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I guess the simplest one to define is halibut, which is an allocated species in British Columbia. Canada gets its share from the International Pacific Halibut Commission and it gets divided up between recreational users. We are entitled to 15% of Canada's annual take. That's about a million pounds. We have 300,000 tidal-water licences, but probably 100,000 of these licence-holders pursue halibut. The test the SFAB faces is a set of rules that will ration a million pounds of fish amongst 100,000 people. That's not an easy task.

In the case of salmon, we take a larger share of Chinook salmon than the commercial fishers do, but that's under the allocation policy, which gives priority access to Chinook and coho to the recreational fishery, whereas the priority on sockeye, pink, and chum goes according to the commercial sector and is part of a negotiated allocation arrangement between the sectors. I have to say that in British Columbia there are very few arguments between the recreational and commercial sectors about access to fish. We have a good allocation arrangement.

However, the recreational impact on fish is very small compared with that of the commercial fisheries, which are designed to catch substantial numbers in short periods of time. That's to their credit—it's what they're designed to do.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Of course, there's also the principle of a public resource being allocated to the highest and best use. That's a principle I strongly subscribe to, so I have some difficulty with the argument you just made, Gerry. It is a public resource, and it's the public's right to get as much from that resource as possible.

Is catch-and-release practised in the tidal waters? Is it becoming more common?

Mr. Owen Bird: Yes, catch-and-release is something that does take place.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay.

Mr. Owen Bird: I would say it occurs for all species for various reasons.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: So actually, those fish that are released are not part of the take and they're not even killed, but the value they bring to the province is enormous for zero harvest.

What is the rate of hooking mortality for fish that are released?

Mr. Owen Bird: It depends quite significantly on the species.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Give me a range—for salmon, let's say.

Mr. Owen Bird: For salmon it's quite low. It's somewhere in the neighbourhood of 10%.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: There are a variety of studies that look at that. For purposes of the annual salmon plan, the department assumes that 15% of all salmon that have been hooked and released will probably not survive. Now, what we are learning is that it depends on what you do to them. If you take a fish out of the water and hold up it up trying to take a picture of it—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I understand that. I just wanted the numbers.

What we're talking about is a high-value activity, which hundreds of thousands of people do, that is essentially very gentle on the resource. Is that a fair comment?

Mr. Owen Bird: That's reasonably fair, yes. When you look at halibut or something, it's probably 1% or 2% mortality.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Mr. Sopuck, you made the point about public access to the resource, which I absolutely agree with. It's a principle of the recreational fishery that this is a common-property resource to which all Canadians have the right of access.

In fact, I talked about halibut. One of the examples that bothers us the most is that the government's policy of providing quota shares on halibut on the west coast has impinged on the public access. We're limited to 15% because it is assumed that the commercial sector owns the remainder of the fish. Now, in British Columbia, the number of vessels fishing for halibut has fallen from about 430 down to about 130. Most of the quota is not fished by the people who hold the quota. The people who are suffering are the ones remaining in the market who have to lease the fish they want access to from what we call "Maui condo quota holders".

Mr. Robert Sopuck: If I may, I'll just stop you there, because I want to get back to MPAs—even though those points are very important. Regarding MPAs then, given how gentle the recreational fishery is on the resource, there really should be no MPA developed off the west coast where recreational fishing is prohibited. Is that a fair comment?

• (0915)

Mr. Owen Bird: Yes, but with the exception of the RCAs, as we've described, which don't fit within the parameters of an MPA and where there definitely needs to be a reduction in access, or at least a need to follow through with that experiment.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay. It seems reasonable to me.

Mr. Owen Bird: Access should be allowed, and there should be sport fishing.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Having said that, you're not necessarily opposed to the notion of fish sanctuaries, strategically located. For example, the national park that I live beside is a sanctuary for big game. Consequently, there's enough big game that come outside the park, and local communities have great hunting because of that.

Could the same concept be applied to certain areas in B.C.?

Mr. Owen Bird: I think that's a challenge, frankly. One of the comments I made was that we need to be very careful about that concept, particularly with non-migratory fish, because you end up impacting the resources available to whatever fishery there may be in that area. They wouldn't be fishing inside that area, for example, but they'd still be fishing to similar limits or quotas they had previously, therefore very badly affecting—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: So the notion of fish sanctuaries is an idea that you would have difficulty with? That's fair ball.

Mr. Owen Bird: In a tidal environment, I think it's challenging.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That's very helpful testimony.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Respectfully though, I think it depends on the species of fish you're talking about. For rockfish, we fully accept the principle that you create an area where the fish that can live to be 100 years old have a decent chance to do that. On the other hand, for other types of fish.... My point is that's why the consultation process is important. You can trust us to protect our sector's interests in the consultation process if we believe it's being conducted in a transparent and honest way.

We will do that, and then we'll deal with these details of which ones should be protected and how they should be protected. We've done that in the past.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Right. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Donnelly, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here and contributing to this study.

I want to pick up on the same line of questioning that Mr. Sopuck started.

Mr. Bird, I will start with you. If it could be stated that the purpose of protection is to assist the recovery of a fishery, first of all, would you agree with that statement, that this could be a purpose of protection?

Mr. Owen Bird: Again, when you use rockfish, as an example, that absolutely could be an outcome there. It's something to be considered. What shouldn't be forgotten—and it just needs to be considered—is what happens in the immediate area where this happens to be. If there are no measures taken to consider the impacts on those stocks, you could end up with an unfortunate situation in which you'd have a preserved area or sanctuary, or whatever you'd like to call it, and then an area that's really in bad shape.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: So the rockfish stay in one area; they grow to a certain size; and if there is little protection, they could be fished right out.

Mr. Owen Bird: That's right.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: But then, where it gets a little murkier is for the non-resident fish that travel to other parts of the ocean. That's where you feel that could be an issue and that's where there's a little more controversy. Is that...?

Mr. Owen Bird: Where you have migratory species, whether it is salmon that migrate thousands of miles, or ling cod, which have seasonal migrations, that's where it gets trickier.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Gerry, do you want to comment?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes. Another example is one that I've encountered in my role on the chinook salmon recovery process in British Columbia. It's very clear that an important part of the natural mortality that's taking place with chinook salmon coming down the Fraser River, the so-called stream type that spend a couple of years in fresh water and then migrates to sea, is what happens in the estuary of the Fraser. So there's increasing attention being paid to the need to ensure that the estuary of the Fraser is protected as a place where those fish spend quite a bit of time acclimating to the ocean

climate, ocean conditions, and so forth. There is a need to protect those areas. That doesn't mean you stop people from going there. Protection can be applied in all sorts of other ways.

• (0920)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Right: so it's management techniques, etc.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Bird, if I could go back, you said something to the effect that enforcing existing environmental laws could accomplish conservation goals today. I think you were talking about just enforcing the law that we have currently.

Could you talk a little bit about that and what you meant by it?

Mr. Owen Bird: I suppose what I meant was that rather than taking an approach where you develop a preservationist regime and eliminate access or any kind of harvest from an area, simply observe what the management regime is for the species based on good science and follow the laws and the regulations accordingly. I think we'd come out of that, particularly from a recreational fishing perspective, in good shape. With rockfish conservation areas, again, maybe take the time to look at those again and consider all of those that access and perhaps impact those rockfish conservation areas and try to address that.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Just to clarify, do you mean federal laws, provincial laws, other laws...?

Mr. Owen Bird: Federal laws, primarily.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: The Fisheries Act, or...?

Mr. Owen Bird: Yes.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Okay.

Mr. Kristianson, you mentioned how in the tier 2 process, which I was really interested in, this could be an improvement. You mentioned the pros, but are there any cons? Is there any downside to it? Is it costly? What would the government have an issue with in doing all tier 2 on everything?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I don't think there are any cost issues. The difficulty that I perceive at tier 2 is that to some extent the federal and provincial government officials at the table have a conflict of interest. They need to balance their responsibility to all Canadians with the crown's fiduciary and constitutional responsibility to first nations. In that bargaining forum there are some issues to be resolved. It seems to me that the way to deal with that is the way that Canada deals with that issue in international negotiations.

I was a salmon commissioner for 15 years, and spent 15 years on the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission. In those contexts, as a Canadian representative at the table, I had behind me a row of people who were there representing various Canadian interests. While they couldn't speak at the table, they could certainly tell me afterwards if I was not handling something appropriately.

I guess what I'm saying is that I think tier 2 would work better if the other Canadian interests were in the room. As I said, that idea was developed in British Columbia in the one context at the suggestion of first nations. I wouldn't for a moment presume to say that it's supported by all first nations. They're exercising their new constitutional responsibilities, and I appreciate that. If I were in the same position, I would probably do the same.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: I wanted to follow up on what Mr. McDonald asked about earlier with regard to one or two recommendations. Are there any further additions you would like to make? I think it's clear that definitions are very important, but I want to pick up on the idea of the alternative management techniques, let's say, or anything that you want to comment on.

For instance, yes, it's good for defining MPAs and protecting portions of biodiversity that need protection, but there was a mention of management techniques. What are those that could help in terms of protecting and recovering a fishery?

Mr. Owen Bird: I guess what I would offer in terms of a recommendation is that I think it's absolutely essential that the appropriate consultation occurs. That would be the be-all.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Kristianson.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Part of the difficulty when you're a volunteer in a process like this is that you keep asking for more consultation, but that of course means that you have to take the time to participate. There are financial issues here. The tradition in Fisheries and Oceans with the sport fishing advisory board is that all the participants are volunteers, but the government covers their expenses to attend meetings. You get travel expenses and so forth.

In that context, frankly, DFO's budget has been starved in recent years. I appeared before this committee on a previous occasion lamenting that fact. Government has to ensure that those resources are there to make sure that at these consultation tables, first nations, who are now I think adequately being considered, and commercial harvesting interests, recreational harvesting interests, and what I would call the "environmental movement" are also there at the table. It shouldn't depend on whether somebody has deeper pockets than somebody else. The government needs that input. When it gets that input, and if it's successful in securing a consensus, it needs to respect that consensus.

• (0925)

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Finnigan for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the panel for being here with us this morning.

I'd just like to follow up, Mr. Kristianson, a little bit on Mr. Donnelly's question about the tier 2 process.

Just to go back, we all know that first nations have treaty rights through the courts. In my area on the east coast, it's generally the rule of thumb that they're usually the first in and last out. Usually they have the first rights for food, for ceremonial purposes, and that. Would you not say that tier 2, the first approach to get that baseline

established, would be the right approach? Could you further elaborate on that?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Absolutely. In the case of the west coast, which I'm more familiar with, first nations' food and social and ceremonial rights are absolute. They have the priority, there's no question about that. It would be silly to challenge that because it's a fact and a reality. It's also a good thing. We assume that DFO needs to consult with first nations to determine what that right means in terms of quantities of fish, etc. My point is that, while that's a negotiation between governments—and I accept that—those decisions and how those rights are to be exercised have implications for others, given that other Canadians have rights as well.

One of my predecessors, the late Bill Otway, would have been happy to come here to give you a lecture on the Magna Carta and the rights of all Canadians, including access to public fish, etc. But we have rights, and these don't have to conflict. We need to have a process that ensures that, as those details are being worked out, other interests are taken into account. The courts are doing that in part, but I think it's better when representatives of different interests are talking to each other in the room to help make those decisions.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Do you have any comments, Mr. Bird, on that?

Mr. Owen Bird: No, I think Gerry's—

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Okay. Maybe I'll give my second question to you, then.

I think you mentioned that we have existing laws to protect the fisheries and all of that already established. I think you said there's really no need to put MPAs in some areas, because we could just enforce the laws that we have there. We've heard testimony that doesn't go far enough.

I've a question from my side of the country where we've had established fishery zones for hundreds of years, and the stocks in most species are doing relatively well. But we've heard that there is a lot more in the whole ecosystem there to protect and to ensure that it will be able to face climate change and everything. It's not just the species of interest.

Would you comment on that?

Mr. Owen Bird: I think what I'm referring to is access to fish and the fisheries. Again, my great concern is that, while I believe that there is support for the idea of MPAs and protected areas, there needs to be a balance between that and the ability to access those areas. I believe it's quite important that you be able to access those areas where it is reasonable to do so. Where there are regulations and there is science to indicate it, you should be able to harvest fish there at a rate that's sustainable.

Your first comment was that I was saying I didn't believe there was any need for any more MPAs. I don't know that I would say that.

• (0930)

Mr. Pat Finnigan: I'm not exactly sure of the wording, but you said something like that.

Mr. Owen Bird: I don't know that I would say that at all, but it seems like quite a lot of areas of the B.C. coast are already dedicated to MPAs. If we're looking at it in a pan-Canadian way, it seems that there's a considerable amount of the Pacific coast already dedicated to those areas. Then, as I say, if care and attention are given to science, to harvest, and those sorts of things, then I'm not sure why we can't proceed and satisfy all aspects.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: It's because we've also heard that in areas where there is extraction or activity going on, it's only 65% effective. Whether that's true or not, that's what we've heard in some of the testimony. With that number in mind, would you think that this should have an influence on determining whether it's recreational or commercial activity in that zone?

Mr. Owen Bird: I'll admit I'm not exactly sure what that number refers to. I'm not sure if that's RCAs or the sponge reefs, or what that is and what that 65% relates to.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: We had Dr. —

Mr. Owen Bird: Again, with migratory species, and even to a lesser degree non-migratory species, it seems as though the impacts of the recreational fishery are such that.... I can say, with regulations and proper management, there should be no reason why that can't be sustainable access. Again, though, I'm not sure what the 65% refers to.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: We had Dr. Natalie Ban here and those were her numbers. Where she got them, I'm not sure, but some of the testimony was there.

Would you care to comment on that, Mr. Kristianson?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I think this is where it's a question of defining what you're protecting. I do know Dr. Ban and I respect her, as a qualified academic, to comment on these kinds of things, but the issue is to define what it is you're protecting.

In the case of glass sponge reefs, you're trying to protect their unique structure and to ensure that future activity around them doesn't detract from that protection. In that case, for example, while I've been espousing the cause of the commercial sector, we were actually saved because it was harmless, in the sense that it was agreed that, given that recreational fishing in that area—there's not a lot, but there's some—never takes place more than 100 feet below the surface, there was no need to ban that fishery from that area.

On the other hand, another kind of curious anomaly, the Bowie Seamount off Haida Gwaii, is already protected. However, in that protection it was agreed that the black cod trap fishery could continue. I assume that the people who made that decision had good reason for it, but fishing for tuna over the Bowie Seamount is banned. Tuna fishing takes place in the top two feet of the water column, so the tuna fishery—and I sat on the tuna advisory board; we can fish tuna out there recreationally—was banned commercially.

Those are the kinds of decisions that would need to be sorted out as you define what protected areas are and what they're intended to do and how they're implemented.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kristianson. I appreciate it.

Mr. Doherty, for five minutes please.

Before you start, it looks like we'll have to extend our time, but if we can put in two full rounds, we'll have Ms. Jordan, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Morrissey, and Mr. Donnelly to end. That will probably take us close to the top of the hour, if it's okay to extend that into our committee business.

Is that okay?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Yes.

The Chair: Done.

Mr. Doherty for five minutes.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our guests today.

I'll ask you to be as concise as you can because I have a number of questions and only five minutes.

To both of our guests today, do you feel that B.C. is shouldering more than its fair share of the conservation efforts?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I think there is a growing perception that we're being asked to. If you take, for example, RCAs and include them in the total, you can quickly get up over the 5%. Whenever we raise that issue with Fisheries and Oceans officials, they say, "Oh, yes, but we're not talking about a number that relates to this coast." When people say that, it leads to suspicion that somehow we're a target here maybe for areas where people don't want to do other things. I can't say that's happening. There's certainly a perception that that could be the case.

• (0935)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Bird?

Mr. Owen Bird: I wouldn't really have anything else to add. Gerry has captured it.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm going to go back to some of your testimony as it relates to consultation. My colleague, Mr. McDonald, suggested that you would say that this government has done very well in terms of the consultation, yet I think some of your testimony would suggest the opposite. The Internet-based letter writing campaign was mentioned a couple of times. Those with deeper pockets, perhaps, have got the officials' ear more than others. I guess my question to you would be, do you feel that between local versus third-party interests, perhaps it's more heavily weighted toward the third-party interests?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I wouldn't have argued that. Certainly, my comment about deep pockets was not related to any activity that I've observed taking place. What I'm saying is that you need to ensure that, by funding the expenses, for example, of people who participate in these processes, you ensure that it isn't an issue of people who have access to money as opposed to ones who don't.

Mr. Todd Doherty: But with all due respect, Mr. Kristianson, you mentioned the mapping process and the tier 2 process—

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Right.

Mr. Todd Doherty: —and you mentioned that there are others, say, our local fishers and our recreational fishers, who cannot afford to be there. They don't have the same backing as perhaps others who are at the table in terms of the mapping process.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Well, I don't think that's what I intended to say. As long as the advisory process that DFO has for the recreational fishery operates as it always has, local anglers are represented and they're not out-represented.

The irony is that to some extent the ability to mount the counter-activity, of course, has nothing to do with big business or other interests. This has been the environmental movement exercising its muscles.

Mr. Todd Doherty: So that's the third party I'm talking about—

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes.

Mr. Todd Doherty: It is the environmental movement, perhaps foreign environmental movements as well.

Is the web-based letter-writing campaign from inside or outside of Canada?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I think this was all domestic. I do not see it as a....

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay.

Mr. Chair, if you and committee members will indulge me, I would like to read this into the record for our consideration:

That the Committee invite the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to appear before the Committee, no later than June 15, 2017, in relation to the study of the Supplementary Estimates (A) 2017-18.

The Chair: Duly noted, and it will be discussed in our committee business as well.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you.

Mr. Kristianson, you mentioned again the definitions to be used as we move forward, and I think you gave a great example about the recreational versus commercial tuna fishery. On the west coast we have a number of different areas—for example, the glass sponge reefs we spoke of. Do you have any other suggestions that the committee should take under advisement in terms of those definitions and how we or the government should be consulting as we move forward?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: As the government moves forward on this, I think there are well-established processes that exist to allow the various interests to be part of the process, particularly the fishing interests, but also local government interests and others.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Have you been consulted by DFO?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Pardon?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Has your group been consulted by DFO?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes, I mean—

Mr. Todd Doherty: A number of times?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Well, the two examples I gave were examples because, as a representative of my sector, I was heavily involved in the process leading to the consensus in both cases.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Bird.

Mr. Owen Bird: Yes, consultation has occurred. The thing is that we are moving forward. It appears that I gave the example of the provincial map process, where the appropriate kind of consultation

did not occur with all the stakeholder groups. We're sensitive to that and believe that the federal government will do better than that.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty. We appreciate that.

Ms. Jordan, you have five minutes, please.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start with Mr. Kristianson. Would it be fair to say that the consultation process is good but there is room for improvement?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you.

We heard testimony from the Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association earlier this month and Mr. Morlock—who was representing them, and I'm sure you are probably familiar with them—said we have some of the healthiest fish populations in the country. Yet, time and time again at this committee we have heard from various organizations that it actually is not the case, that we have a declining fish population in many areas and a number of fish populations that are in jeopardy.

I wonder if you would like to comment on that. Do you feel that was a fair statement, or do you think we need to do more in terms of conservation? I would like your opinion on that.

Mr. Owen Bird: I think it's a general statement. When you have such a large and diverse country and a tremendous number of species available for sportfishing and commercial fishing and otherwise, it's quite a sweeping and broad statement. Certainly, on the B.C. coast, which I am most familiar with, there are great successes, there are some stable fisheries, and there are some that are of concern, for sure.

I think that, in general, they're being observed and there are steps taken in most cases to address those concerns.

In answer to your question, I think that's a fair statement as a general or sweeping one, but because of the scope and size of our country, there are variations within that theme.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: With regard to the rockfish conservation areas, what would have to change in the definition of a rockfish conservation area to make it a marine protected area? You said there's a missing element. What is that missing element?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I can only in this case quote what we were told at the last meeting of the main board of the SFAB, that as long as harvesting by first nations is accepted in those areas, then those areas cannot be defined as marine protected areas. It's a tricky one, because there are some kinds of fishing that take place in RCAs. For example, traps that land on the bottom don't bother rockfish. The commercial prawn fishery was able to show that it doesn't catch any rockfish in its prawn traps, and so it can actually fish in those areas, as can a recreational harvester, but you can't go in there with a hook and line and fish, because you can't fish for salmon in a rockfish conservation area and not catch rockfish. I have great hope for the RCA one. I'm reasonably confident that appropriate consultation with first nations will lead first nations to agree to help ensure that those areas have long-term protection. It's in their interests to do so, and I think that can happen.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you.

We're talking about 5% by the end of this year on all three coasts, and yet you seem to feel that maybe your coast—I won't say it's being targeted, because I don't like that word—has a lot more to offer in terms of marine protected areas. Do you think there shouldn't be any more focus, then, on the B.C. coast? When we look at MPAs, to me the question is what do we need to protect? Obviously there is a lot on the B.C. coast that needs to be protected. The concern I have is how we determine where we go next, if you feel that you—I won't say have done your part—maybe are being unduly looked at.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Do I think we've protected enough important ecological and other zones in Canada? No. Do I think that British Columbia has somehow reached its number and should be exempted from any further activity? Absolutely not. But what I want is a rational, science-based discussion about how best to do these things. Next week, I will attend a meeting on the bird sanctuary area off Scott Islands. The week after that, I have to go to a meeting about the new wrinkle, which is the EBSAs, the large marine offshore areas. I don't know that I see any problem with telling people they can't do something on the bottom of the ocean in an area I can't possibly get to. I accept that protecting those areas is a good thing to do. I would not want you to go away thinking that somehow I'm opposed to marine protected areas. What I want is a sensible way of getting there, which, if you do it properly, means everybody accepts it as the right thing to do.

Let me tell you, creating rockfish conservation areas was not easy. It took a lot of hard work by our sector, the commercial sector, and others, but we've achieved something, and we'd like that recognition, by having it included in the the areas that have been defined as protected.

• (0945)

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: But—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kristianson. I appreciate it.

Mr. Arnold, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank my friends from B.C. for being here to add their input. It's an important study. I also want to recognize Mr. Kristianson for the SFAB process. I actually took part in that process in my former role, and it was a circular process where input was provided to the committee members by DFO, and the committee members provided input back to DFO on a regular basis. It's a process that works well.

I'd like to go back to one of your comments just a few moments ago, Mr. Kristianson. You said that harvest by first nations precludes an area from being considered an MPA, and yet we're hearing, with regard to the areas of interest in the north, that one of the reasons they want to create the MPAs is to maintain the local first nations harvest up there. Is there a difference between the west coast definitions and the north coast definitions?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: No, I think the same issue is at play. Under the Fisheries Act, I think I'm right in saying, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has the right to close fisheries to everybody for conservation reasons. The wrinkle that appeared in the case of

RCAs is that you protect an RCA because it's an area of high abundance. Clearly, to define that as an area where first nations cannot harvest is tricky to do, because you're running up against their constitutional right. That said, I think one needs to make a clear distinction between protecting an area, whether it's done by treaty or otherwise, in order to protect first nations' rights and creating marine protected areas, which are designed for a different purpose, and which, therefore, ideally should have rules that apply generally.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

This can go perhaps to both of you.

Should Canada be looking at defining its MPAs under the IUCN definition or more under Canada's or the FAO's definitions, so that those MPAs suit Canada's possibly unique roles and responsibilities?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I've had to grapple with this issue, particularly when sitting on a committee dealing with Haida Gwaii and the creation of areas around Haida Gwaii. I have to tell you that some of the problems we faced were in trying to apply the IUCN designations. They did not, to me, seem appropriate to our circumstances.

In that context I'm a bit in favour of a made-in-Canada definition whereby we all agree that this is what we're trying to do and this is the way it applies in this area.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

I've seen the impact of closures in wildlife management in B.C., concentrating pressures on the areas that remain open.

Do you see this as a risk from the creation of some of these MPAs, that we shift the pressure from one area, concentrate it even more in remaining areas, causing the need for even greater restrictions and regulation and monitoring and enforcement? Is that a challenge?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I would agree with you that it's a challenge.

Mr. Owen Bird: Yes, that's a good characterization: it's a challenge.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay.

Mr. Owen Bird: It may not be insurmountable, but it has to be considered.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Would we be better with overall management and regulation of the entire area, rather than a focus on small protected areas?

Mr. Owen Bird: It's tempting to consider the RCAs as the small areas and then think what happens around those areas, but if you think about another species or another model of access, then a larger area might be the way to go. Otherwise, you end up having a refuge and you potentially impact the productivity of the general area in ways that will be very difficult to understand, I think.

• (0950)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Would the MPAs or the regulations around them on use and harvest and so on possibly restrict the management of other species? I'm talking about predator-prey relationships and so on. Do those become complicated within MPAs?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I think in general terms the answer is yes. This raised a whole other set of questions that came earlier, about estuaries and whatnot—the fact that log booms and estuaries provide a place for seals and sea lions to haul out so that they're not susceptible to their predator-prey relationship from killer whales. It's one of those circular ecological problems that...

The problem is, none of this is simple. If it were, we probably would have done it a long time ago.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kristianson.

Mr. Morrissey, take five minutes, please.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by complimenting both witnesses for your thoughtful presentations today. You gave them in a very thoughtful manner—the sky is not falling in. There are challenges out there, and there are issues, but I was very impressed with the depth of knowledge you have on the issues.

I have a question. Do you see a contradiction between the term “sustainably managed and protected area” and MPA?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Yes, I think those refer to two different things. The marine protected area definition doesn't say that nothing happens there, but by and large it has been used as a way of preventing activities that were contradictory to the overall ecological status of that area.

The tricky part for our fishery is this. The Race Rocks Marine Protected Area off Victoria, which is still waiting to be established, is a good example. You try to protect items on that structure, but if you make the boundary around Race Rocks slightly bigger, then no one can go salmon fishing there, while salmon fishing is not what you're trying to protect with the Race Rocks Marine Protected Area.

It's working out, though. We thought we had that one solved, frankly, and we agreed on it.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Is the term, then, interchangeable? Can they both define the same objective?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I don't think they're interchangeable. I think that sustainable management refers to a number of different things. It is different from the decision to protect areas over the long run because you want to ensure.... You're protecting a whole variety of different things, whereas sustainable management in fisheries generally refers to the sustainable ability to continue to harvest over a longer period of time without doing damage to the underlying stock.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I want to back to my colleague Mr. Arnold's question because it's an intriguing point that he raised, as well as a valid one. Canada is a unique environment. Should we be looking at refining the definition of how we apply MPAs here as it relates to.... In some areas, we do have commercial fishing activity going on within MPAs. To the purist, that area then is not truly an MPA. Therefore, we don't get our numbers that we should be looking at. Should we, from your extensive personal involvement in the past, from your groups, be looking at our definition of what an MPA should be?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I never give short answers, but my short answer is yes. As someone who has participated in a series of

international negotiations—I'm a former foreign service officer—I will tell you that Canada protects its interests by ensuring that it puts forward solutions appropriate to Canada, solutions that it can persuade the international community are acceptable and the right way to go. To accept a set of definitions made in some international forum where your nation's interests were not necessarily paramount isn't, I think, the desirable way to go.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: From that experience of yours, can that argument be made effectively by Canada?

• (0955)

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I believe so, yes. From my time as a salmon commissioner, I'm proud of the way that Canada has advanced its interests with respect to the United States. I participate, as does Owen, in the annual meetings of the International Pacific Halibut Commission. We don't apologize to anybody for making sure that Canada's interests are well protected, and nor should we in this particular context. It may well be that you create your own definition. If there's an artificial number, maybe you do more by predicting a greater amount in ways that suit your national interests. You've satisfied those other people. They're not going to carp and quibble because you have come up with a better mousetrap.

The Chair: You have roughly 30 seconds, if you wish.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: I apologize.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: No, your testimony is fascinating. One of the concerns we've heard before this committee comes from commercial fishers. They are not, I'll be candid, trusting of the consultative process undertaken by DFO in setting up the MPAs. Some of it relates to the comment that you made earlier: they go through this process, but then at the last minute things are changed, and they're not sure how they are changed. How can we better deal with that side of the issue?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: That is the thrust of what I was trying to say in the first part of my presentation today. While I am sometimes an adversary in the recreational-commercial context, I fully know whom you got that message from, and I fully support the message that they brought, that the way the glass sponge reefs issue was handled in British Columbia poisoned the well for future consultation. A number of people who devoted a great deal of time and a considerable amount of money to try to come up with better ways to manage the harvest around the glass sponge reefs to meet both the conservation and the other interests felt that they had been betrayed. I don't think that's good for government. It's not anything to do with party or partisanship or anything else. As a number of people in this room know, I have a partisan background, but I am now a fisheries politician. I'm devoted to protecting fish, fisheries, and the people around them. In that context, we're all on the same side and should be.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kristianson.

Mr. Donnelly, you have three minutes, please.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's been argued that MPAs can be a tool to protect marine biodiversity like plants, animals, and their habitat. When we look at habitat specifically as an issue, and if we accept that habitat plays a key role in fisheries, do you feel that habitat produces and enhances certain species of fish and marine life? If you agree with that premise, do you think MPAs can be effective in terms of habitat protection?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: My short answer to both questions is yes.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Okay.

You mentioned management, but proper management as well. I would add that enforcement is obviously key in managing.

For the recreational fishery, what are we talking about specifically in terms of proper management?

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: In my last appearance before this committee, I lamented the fact that over a long period, under two different governments, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans had been starved for resources, and in particular was being starved of resources to properly manage the recreational fishery.

We were asking for a program called the recreational fisheries vision implementation, and we were telling government that we actually had the way to pay for it. We wanted the recreational licence fee increased substantially, and that money would have more than offset what we were asking government to spend. However, because of the cursed User Fees Act, that wasn't possible.

In fact, there is now in the hated omnibus bill something called the service fee act. This committee should be interested in that piece of legislation. My first reading of it is that it's a positive step forward. I would hope that if it moved forward in the proper way, it will provide a way in which the people who value recreational fishing, who believe that their sector is undervalued....

I pay \$17 a year for access to all of the tidal water resources of the west coast of Canada. That's absurd. I would hope that the bill doesn't get through without people providing that proper look at it to make sure it meets the needs that I think everybody in this room has in common.

•(1000)

The Chair: I want to thank both of our guests for being here today.

We're going to break for a few minutes, but I want to ask my colleagues to please be very quick if you wish to talk to our guests. We have to get on with things because we may be interrupted by votes.

Mr. Kristianson, Mr. Bird, thank you again so much for travelling here and for your wonderful in-depth testimony.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerry Kristianson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members.

The Chair: We'll suspend for just a few minutes.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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