

# **Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Association**

## **Presentation to the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council**

### **Utilization of Herring Resources**

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Presented by:

Robert Jenkins  
Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Association  
Bluefin Tuna Advisory Committee

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to express our fishermen's views. This fishery has been taken for granted for years and we are now in a position where dramatic actions are required to correct the situation.

I have a number of concerns. These include the following issues:

- Herring as forage fish for tuna
- Large seiners / mid-water trawls vs. inshore fishermen
- Spring versus fall spawning stocks
- Spawning beds and disturbance by hard bottom gear.

I will not be addressing the general biology and biomass estimates for herring. I will leave this to others from the scientific and fishing communities to flush out.

For clarity, I will be leaving a hard copy and an electronic copy of my presentation, for your records.

### **Herring a forage fish for tuna:**

This topic has been largely overlooked in considering the management of herring in Canadian waters. It is easy to miss this issue but the impact on other stocks which depend on herring as food can produce dramatic changes in their foraging and feeding habits.

There are many fish and other wildlife which depend on herring as a food source. Our concern deals with tuna and the use of herring in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

You may be aware that tuna has recently been put on the threatened and endangered species list by some organizations. Our government has not gone this far as yet but the signs are there and indeed this step may not be far away.

Our concern is the availability of herring to tuna while they "fatten up" in the Southern Gulf. If we allow seiners to fish all sizes of herring, the impact on the herring and subsequently the tuna, will, we feel, be dramatic. In regard to the inshore herring fishery, we see a lesser impact on the stocks as the effort is spread out over a much wider area.

This is not to say that when we set fishing quotas, that we do not consider tuna in the calculations.

We are not trying to stop the herring fishery all together, this would be unreasonable. We are however advocating that other fish and wildlife which feed on herring should be factored into the equation and sufficient herring biomass be made available to these stocks.

### **Large seiners / mid-water trawls vs. inshore fishermen:**

Always a contentious issue and one which generates a great deal of concern in all sectors of the industry.

I will not bore you with the historical details of the seiners ruining the Pacific herring fishery and it has never recovered to previous levels. The mistakes we made in bringing these very same vessels to the East Coast and doing the exact same thing. We literally wiped out our herring stocks and had years where no fishery was able to withstand any pressure.

It would probably not be beneficial to mention the Canso Causeway which in itself dramatically changed the landscape when it comes to herring.

Our concerns, than, with the seiners and mid-water trawls center on the following:

1. They are indiscriminate fishing machines. They kill a lot of small fish which results in waste and a negative impact on our stocks.
2. They have the potential to wipe out entire stock segments. In other words, an entire sub-population of herring could vanish in one night.
3. The seiners cannot discriminate between spring and fall spawners. They have a quota for each. If the spring quota cannot be caught, they catch fall spawners instead. In the Baie de Chaleur, whole populations of spring spawners are being decimated.
4. The seiners and mid-water trawls are centered with a few corporate owners. The resource is making a few people a lot of money. If this were spread between the many fishing communities, there would be a welcome change in distribution of the wealth from the herring resource. This process would distribute the pressure on the stocks and provide a safety valve of untouched quota.
5. We know that these vessels cannot make it on their own in the deep water. We see their movement into shallow water areas such as the Baie de Chaleur and the North side of PEI. Ask yourself the question, WHY? You will find that the resource levels are strained and the large vessels want to strain all the water in the Gulf to collect the last herring. In the meantime, inshore fishers and fish species which

depend on the herring are shut out. I guess I would ask, “when is enough, enough?”

### **Spring versus fall spawning stocks:**

Generally, we understand the spring spawners spawn in the shallow water during the spring season. The fall spawners spawn in deeper water in the fall.

Inshore fishers target the spring fish for smoking and bait. The fall spawners are fished for roe and bait.

The large seiners however repeatedly fish mixed fish. Monitoring proves this. Ask the herring biologists.

While I do not consider myself an expert, common sense tells me that the management of seiners is a farce. The indiscriminate fishing of both stocks with virtually no control is not only wasteful but it is also a tragedy.

Who pays? Well, there are several groups paying:

- The herring stocks themselves. Maybe we will see spring spawners on the endangered species list.
- Inshore fishermen who have limited mobility. If a seiner wipes out a local stock, they simply sail away and wipe out someone else.
- Species which use herring as food. In our case, our main concern is tuna but there are other species as well.
- Local communities. Their industry dies and processing disappears as a community employer.

Why wait until we fall off the edge of the cliff? Common sense tells me we are dangerously close to serious long term shortfalls in the herring resource.

The only logical choice would be to remove the culprits. In this case, the seiners and mid-water trawlers.

**Spawning beds and disturbance by hard bottom gear:**

My final topic deals with the disturbance of the fertilized eggs (spawn), by bottom gear.

On Fishermen's Bank we have had "rock hoppers" riding right over the spawning beds. The destruction of spawn is unforgiveable. Why anyone would be so greedy as to destroy a spawning bed and the fertilized eggs is beyond my imagination.

We would like to see specific areas protected. Even better would be to outlaw hard bottom gear in whole stretches of fishing areas. This would protect other species such as lobster as well.

These people do not consider the negative impact they are having on other fishermen and their livelihood. They should be removed from the fishery. I would like to thank this Council for taking the time to hear the views of the Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Association. I want you to know that we are deeply concerned with this resource and the future of our fisheries.

I would be pleased to entertain any questions you may have.

Thank you

Robert Jenkins  
Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's association  
Tuna Advisory Committee