

Presentation to the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council

Thank you for inviting me to voice my opinion on Atlantic herring.

I have been involved in the herring fishery for approximately 45 yrs. Initially there were weirs in the Annapolis Basin, Digby, approximately 8 weirs along the Digby Neck, Bay of Fundy shore of N.S., and 9 weirs in St. Mary's bay. There used to be gillnet fishermen selling herring for lobster bait and some fishermen used to get much of their own lobster bait by towing a large dip net through the water at night. Now the weirs and gill netters have mostly disappeared due to over fishing by large mobile seiners.

I would agree with R.Jenkins from Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Assoc. in describing the seiners as "indiscriminate fishing machines" with the potential to wipe out entire stock segments. Why should fixed gear fishermen, such as weir fishers, have to watch large offshore boats, many greater than 100 ft, drive the herring out of the small coves. About 8 yrs. ago every harbour authority from Westport to the head of the Bay of Fundy, on the N.S. shore, signed a petition requesting seiners be kept off the shore so that their small communities could make a living. Local fishermen were unable to catch sufficient herring in their nets for smoke houses or bait.

I used to attend herring management meetings until a scientist told me there was as many herring as ever. I, in turn told him, "I fished in this bay all my life and anyone who says there is as many herring as ever is a fool". He shook his fist at me, told me to "F---" off and never come there again and say that. This kind of situation deters the inshore fisherman from taking part in herring management/conservation issues.

I realize that we cannot get rid of the seiners completely. Companies depend on them to keep up their inventories. However, there is no need for them to be depleting stocks close to shore, especially herring headed toward the spawning grounds. If a fisherman gets caught with a lobster bearing eggs, he will get fined. Why should herring seiners be allowed to fish on the spawning grounds where herring are bunched up to lay eggs? Sometimes this amounts to hundreds of tons of herring. Finally, people are realizing herring is not a never ending resource. The seiner fleet should be kept 12 miles off shore, like draggers greater than 65 ft. They should also be kept off

the spawning grounds.

Seals were unheard of along our shore when I started weir fishing. Gradually we saw an occasional seal and treated it as a pet. Now there are hundreds which tear large holes in the twine and dig holes under the twine allowing the herring to escape.

Approx. 15-20yrs ago weirs filled up several times with herring and fishermen waited, hoping to sell their catch. Now we catch small bunches, taking several days to fill the weir. I believe, I own the only weir on the Nova Scotia shore of the Bay of Fundy.

We must not forget about the impact on other stocks which depend on herring for food. I wonder about the whales which arrive on our shores in the summer looking for herring to fatten up. If I sail for miles and see no sign of herring on my sounder, do you not think these giant majestic creatures are also having difficulty?

Thank you again,
Stanley Stanton

Fisherman(owner/operator weir, Bay of Fundy, Sandy Cove, N.S.)