



What We Heard

“Our group was born from the belief and recognition that our Nations can better realize their goal of sustainable environments, and healthy local economies and communities, by working together.”

Getting to Know Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management Groups

- Participants represented both inland and coastal groups, member nations of two groups, and an organization that was approached in the past about starting a group. Some groups have only a few members, while others have more than 20.
 - Some are dealing with environmental issues caused by urban sprawl or intense industry and resource development. *“Economic development has its impacts: there are toxicology issues and habitat issues with industry and the port.”*
- Participants are clear that program funding only pays for core activities: salaries and rent. Actual activities are funded by partners or through competitive opportunities.
 - The approach taken by groups to develop work plans each year varies: one participant said they give their work plans to members about six months in advance to involve them in the process, while another did not involve members much because the work plan only changes a little each year. *“We just make sure we get our core funding: good people to respond to the issues.”*
- Two groups are experiencing internal challenges, including the withdrawal of a member nation. However, the majority report having very close working relations with their nations. *“We never do independent science: it’s always with one or more member nations.”* Two groups are also collaborating through a memorandum of understanding to address common broader issues. *“We’re working together to deal with 13 different provincial acts using funding strategically to achieve our work plan. We don’t want to put too much effort in one area over another or to have two geographic mappers.”*

Staff and Expertise

“We’re told [our] job is ‘to work [our]selves out of a job’ to give [our] skills to First Nations.”

- In general, groups that participate in the program have some or all of the following staff: executive director or administrator, biologist, fisheries technician, marine use planner, data collection monitor, and communications coordinator. Many groups have more than one biologist or technical staff, but they may not be funded through the program. One participant has a cumulative effects coordinator.

Understanding your Services and Service Delivery Potential

- Services common across aquatic resource and oceans management groups include technical ‘field’ activities, such as: stock assessments, catch monitoring, and data

collection (including for recreational fisheries), and habitat restoration. Groups also offer many 'non-field' services, such as coordination of traditional knowledge, marine use planning, youth recruitment, helping members prepare submissions for legislative reviews, and policy analysis.

- Most groups have expensive technical equipment and expertise that are shared for the benefit of members. One group is presently working toward collaborative management on crab and would like to extend this activity to other fisheries.
- Groups are engaged in both marine and freshwater projects. Some have monthly technical meetings to work together on common issues. *"Members share priorities on wider areas, as well as on individual priorities where they think the group could assist."*

Defining Services: Technical Capacity Needs

"We're involved in all of these services, but none of them are in our program agreement."

- Participants added a range of services to a list of common services that they would like to offer if they had the technical capacity: geographic information system and field-mapping, cumulative effects approaches, coastal/estuary research, habitat restoration, revitalization of traditions and culture, food security protection, and reconstitution of Indigenous law and knowledge in fisheries management.
 - Groups want more biologists, scientists and technical staff. They also want to build a foundation for better, ethical science that is not 'confined by the politics of the day'. *"Peer-reviewed science that can't be overturned by government."*
 - Groups would like to hire or develop marine planners, fisheries managers, marine response technicians, facilitators, proposal writers, and leaders. *"We need leaders and field staff who are engaged and actually interested in speaking to our people."* They would also like a 'pool' for succession planning.
 - Several groups would like to be more involved in other natural resource and environmental activities. *"We need funding to monitor industries in our community. They find look at the impacts at the wrong time of the year, if they do at all."* While there is some interest in species at risk activities, it is presently a 'side of the desk' activity and needs more fisheries management, compliance and enforcement.
- There is strong support for youth engagement and education programs, especially at the community-level. *"We need to get members educated in priority areas. I want a team of professionals from the community with university degrees."* There is also interest in emergency preparedness as long as the team is properly trained and equipped to handle both marine and freshwater incidents, and search and rescue.

Service Delivery Funding: Needs and Options

"With reconciliation, there may be new source government funding, such as new conservation funds and new taxes on resource use."

- Participants outlined in detail the professional and funding needs of their groups. This includes identifying the number and types of technical staff they require to complete specific services, as well as salary estimates. *"I'm grateful for the funding, but we need*

more. We're forced to go outside to get our wish list done: habitat restoration, stock assessments, and the work of biologists." One person viewed equipment maintenance capacity as a priority. Another saw a greater need for legal assessment and training specialists. Still another valued facilitators and logistics coordinators.

- Participants are challenged to get external federal funding. *"There is so much out there right now, but we don't have the capacity to respond in the timelines given. We were given two weeks to develop a proposal for the Coastal Restoration Fund and there was no time to get the Nations together."*
 - One participant said the Pacific Salmon Commission funding streams were not getting to their group. *"[The Department] should not be dipping into that fund."*
- Participants see funding options through federal and provincial agency programs and special funds, foundations and other philanthropic groups, public-private partnerships, academic groups and own source revenues. Some groups are looking to start or leverage economic development activities or to offset their group's funding needs. Others also see cost efficiencies in leveraging the research of others, including the work of academic and philanthropic organizations.
 - One participant thought emergency response services should be funded by rail and shipping companies, port authorities and involved industries. *"Some kind of stipend paid by industry to fund emergency response coast wide."*

Understanding Relationships

"We need to foster good working relationships with companies and government."

- Participants interact with many staff at Fisheries and Oceans Canada; most often, Aboriginal affairs advisors, regional or program directors, area directors, fisheries managers (e.g., species coordinators and stock assessment leads) and habitat managers. They have very little interaction with scientists at the Pacific Biological Station. One group interacts with conservation and protection officers because they work with the group's guardian watchmen. *"Someone came in last month to talk about the guardian program, but none of ours are funded through [departmental] programs."*
- Participants also have working relationships with other federal and provincial agencies, as well as academic and non-governmental organizations. For example, several participants work closely with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations in marine use planning to define environmental zones and protection plans. Others have started to develop relationships with Environment and Climate Change Canada, Transport Canada, and the Canadian Coast Guard as a result of legislative reviews, the Oceans Protection Plan, and Oceans Networks Canada.
 - A few groups saw an overlap of multiple federal agencies in marine issues, such as the Major Projects Management Office. *"You have to set up another society to deal with aquatic issues for the major projects office, which is money wasted."*
- One participant said his Council would like to see a more direct, government-to-government relationship through the aquatic resource and oceans management program.

Participation in Decision-Making Processes

“When the fishery starts and when it stops – that’s the only part up for negotiation.”

- Most participants do not see their data or traditional knowledge reflected in decision-making made by the Department. *“There’s zero interest.”* One group provided five pages of quantified, reflective information to the Department to incorporate into an integrated fisheries management plan but *“absolutely nothing was used from it.”*
 - One group is ‘slowly starting to see’ their work in departmental documents and decisions, but that only started when they brought in western science to back up their traditional knowledge. *“We spent the past 18 months re-analyzing joint data just to confirm what we knew 10 years ago.”* Another group said an enumeration of the food fishery led to some changes for one of their member nations.

Indigenous Knowledge and Input

“We need to translate traditional knowledge and laws into something that Western science and law can understand.”

- Participants have collected and gathered a lot of traditional knowledge. One is working with the University of Victoria to collect stories and traditional laws in order to strengthen their position in agreements. Another has agreements to hold data on behalf of two of their nations. *“We found ways to publish traditional knowledge information in a way that Nations felt comfortable sharing.”* Another is connecting their catalogue of knowledge to a geographic information system site to overlay maps.
- Participants expect to see traditional knowledge respected by the Department and reflected in decision-making. *“It should be elevated because traditional knowledge is the touchstone to create the base for Rights.”*
 - One participant said they included executive level officials at the Department in correspondence to ensure traditional knowledge is acknowledged. *“We’ve had some success related to food, social and ceremonial issues to get research and harvest closures. Often we get ‘no’, but when we move up the chain, it helps.”*
 - Another said their traditional knowledge collection project was stopped because it became part of the Oceans Protection Program, and they had to apply again for it.

Making Program Improvements

“We want equitable funding for every Nation from all government programs and assurance of the funds far earlier than we do now.”

- Participants shared some insight as to where program had gone wrong in the past and where it still needed improvements. For example:
 - The aggregate process did not always take cultural or geographical differences into consideration, which resulted in inappropriate groupings. *“It was a marriage of convenience for us. Certainly, there are synergies and shared concerns on the broader level, but our priorities are not really addressed by our group.”* One

participant thought the program could have more flexibility to achieve both shared objectives through aggregation and individual geographic objectives without it.

- One participant shared his experience of being approached by the Department to potentially start an aquatic resource group, but officials came back and said there was no funding to start it. *“Why did they approach us in the first place?”*
- The money received through the program arrives too late in the year. *“I spend April and May putting the work plan together, but we don’t get funding until fall.”* The lack of timely funding creates problems, such as staff retention. *“You can’t be an employer of choice when your staff may have to miss a cheque once or twice a year.”* Participants would also like to see fairness in the funding across groups.
- Program funding is inconsistent. *“It’s a struggle with government programs – they agree with the rates the first year, then challenge them the next.”* Program reporting is also onerous. A few participants are also being asked to report on all of their funding sources, even those external to the federal government.
- One participant recalled being asked by the Department to consider what they would like the program to look like during a review, *“but nothing seems to have come from that exercise.”*
- A few participants would like to see more synergy between the Department’s Indigenous programs. *“Member nations should be talking more often with their aquatic resource and oceans management groups to better plan out Aboriginal Fishery Strategy projects so they feed into the bigger issues we want to address.”* They would also like more and consistent contact with officials. *“We worked with an official who never came to the community – not once. That ‘us and them’ mentality has to be overcome.”*
- While they do not want the Department ‘poaching’ people mentored and trained over years, groups see value in the cross-pollination of Indigenous staff into Fisheries and Oceans Canada. *“While we do not have a great relationship with the Department, we do with Conservation and Protection because one is a community member.”* They also think cultural exchanges have a resounding impact on the relationship between the Department and First Nations communities.

Defining Success

“If the goal is to take over jurisdictional authority, at what point are we going to start learning how it’s done?”

- Participants believe the success of the program will be realized when there is co-management of resources. They view collaboration as key to achieving this goal. One also noted the importance of moving away from the present funding and reporting system to be able to reach co-management. *“We’re reporting on a checklist. We need sovereignty to design our own project and budget.”*
- Groups would like to have equitable, accessible and consistent funding through the program and renewed flexibility in their agreements to be able to address their member’s needs as they may arise.

- Specific success-defining priorities include: meeting the food, social, and ceremonial needs of member nations, capacity at the community-level, training and education to achieve professional standards, membership satisfaction, being prepared for the future, passing along traditional knowledge, less paternalistic program structure, well-training and retained staff, ecosystem-based management, and returning to traditional ways of doing things.

Measuring Performance

“Ultimately, performance is measured by the Nations. They are not concerned with the annual work plan, they are concerned about their long-term community marine plan; however, the goal is to align these two plans.”

- Participants measure performance over both the short and long terms: completing their work plans every year, and achieving goals identified in their strategic plans. The achievement of broader, strategic goals is the higher priority for groups.