

Sitka Workshop

March 16–18, 2005

Sitka, Alaska

Community-based fisheries seeks to develop and implement new practices of sustainable fisheries management that are responsive to the scale of communities, their fisheries, and their social and economic structures and dynamics.

Approximately 40 U.S. and Canadian practitioners, fishermen, and community leaders gathered in Sitka, Alaska to discuss issues, strategies, and next steps in community-based fisheries management (CBFM). The workshop, a follow-up meeting to one held in October 2004 in Maine, focused on the opportunities and appetite for a broad based movement in the U.S. and Canada. The group proved to be a very powerful and motivated collection of experienced thinkers on the topic and they rose to the occasion.

The agenda as constructed around four peer-moderated group discussions worked well as a meeting format. Three focal groups met during the meeting: a ‘framework declaration’ group, an ‘on-the-ground’ tools and practices group, and a U.S. Magnuson–Stevens Sustainable Fisheries Act reauthorization group. The results of their deliberations represent current thinking and work in progress.

There was general discussion of fundamental issues about whether CBFM will form as a movement across North America to promote this form of management, if a functional support network can be created, how case information will catalogued and shared, and what practical policy actions should be considered and acted upon. More broadly the meeting was an opportunity to assess what these activities could sum up to and what the next steps should be and how these will be supported through organizations and with what funding.

A leadership group to carry-on these discussions has formed and recently met by teleconference. This ongoing effort reflects the immense nature and challenges of the issues of community scale, leadership capacity, and running “against the tide” of current and entrenched trends in fisheries management in both the U.S. and Canada. These issues were not going to be solved by the Sitka group, but the meeting served to catalyze west coast participation and views into the nations-wide gathering.

The outputs of the meeting are the declaration document as mentioned above, and the notes from the two other “tools” and “U.S. policy” groups that met. These have been circulated to the entire group and the larger “group of interest” that included participants from Maine, and those who could not attend the Sitka event. In addition, these documents will be posted on various web sites of participating organizations as informal networking and communications expands.

Finally, a report will be produced for both the Kennebunkport and Sitka meetings based on a review of community-based fisheries management in the United States funded by the Ford Foundation.