

2005 Abalone Watch Participant Survey

Introduction

Haida Gwaii Abalone Stewards (HGAbS) started an Abalone Watch program in 2004. Vessel operators, business owners and other volunteers were registered and asked to report suspicious activities that may be related to abalone. In 2005 approximately 50 participants registered for the program. The purpose of the survey was to:

- Profile typical participants and estimate overall volunteer effort;
- Assess the incidence of unreported observations of suspicious activity; and
- Identify ways that the Abalone Watch program could be improved.

Methods

A list of survey questions was developed by Haida Fisheries Program with input from DFO and HGAbS partners (Appendix 1). Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone by Haida Fisheries Program staff, Mr. Pat Fairweather and Mr. Robert Russ.

Interviews are presented separately for 1) volunteers who were mainly vessel operators or marine business owners; and 2) Gwaii Haanas and Haida Fisheries Program watchmen who operate at base-camps. Volunteers were interviewed from March 1, 2005 to April 30, 2006. Watchmen were interviewed from June 24 to July 15, 2005.

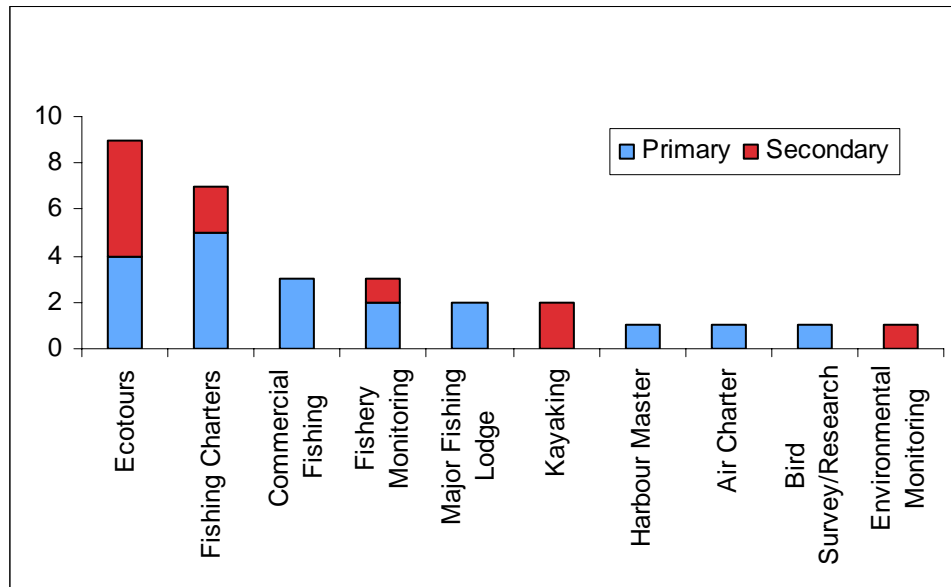
Results

A total of 34 interviews were conducted. Nineteen interviews were completed with vessel operators or marine business owners. Fifteen interviews were completed with Watchmen including ten Gwaii Haanas Watchmen and five Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen.

Nineteen vessel operators or business owners were interviewed. Participants were mainly vessel operators but included 2 major fishing lodges, 1 air charter and a harbour master. Following is a summary of results:

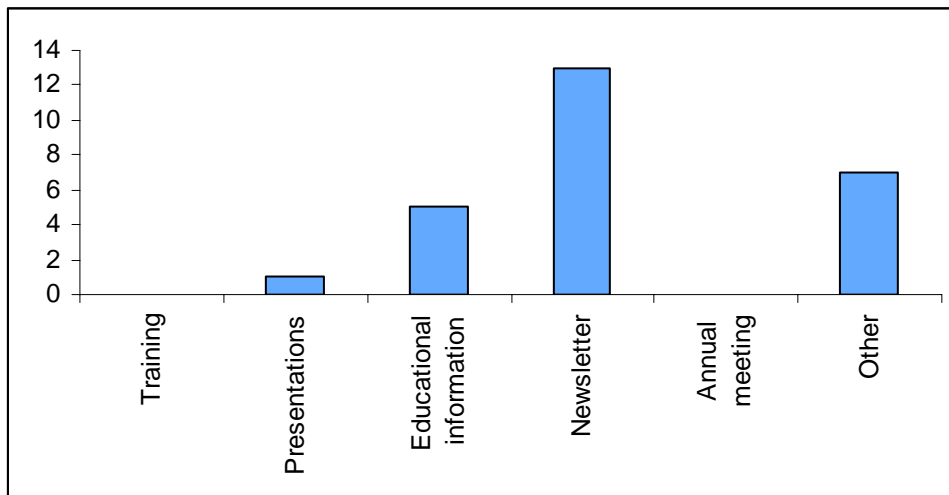
- The primary activities of this group were identified as fishing charters, ecotours, commercial fishing and fishery monitoring with eleven respondents reporting a secondary activity (Figure 1). Most operations were based from a vessel (14), and one had access to a base-camp. Other bases of operation were base-camps/skiffs (3), docks (1) and aircraft (1).

Figure 1. Primary and secondary activities of Abalone Watch vessel operators and businesses (n=19)



- Primary area of operations and number of operators (in brackets) were: Area 1 (4); Area 2 East (9), and Area 2 West (5). The air charter operator reported his area of operation as Haida Gwaii. Six operators reported having a secondary area of operation: Area 2 West (5) and Area 1. There was some coverage in many areas of the islands including Langara Island (1), Naden Harbour (1), Cartwright Sound (4), Louise Island (1), Gwaii Haanas (2), Sgaan Gwaii (1), Frederick Island (1) and Tasu Sound (1).
- Two of the operators observed suspicious activities that had not been reported. One identified “a couple of suspicious boats” and the other “4-5 suspicious boats”.
- Both operators gave the reason for not reporting as not having evidence. One added that they had no timely way to report.
- All operators responded to ways for HGAbS to assist in the coming year, many identifying more than one approach. There were a total of 26 responses by the 15 interviewees. One individual said that the program was good ‘as is’. A newsletter was the most popular response (13), followed by other (6), educational information (5) and presentations (1). The type of educational information identified were pamphlets, fact sheets or other information. An orientation for Abalone Watch volunteers was interpreted as a presentation. Other ways to assist that were identified included: commercial opening notices (3); more air coverage (1); eMail (1); secure communications (1); and public meeting (1). The two who had observed suspicious activities identified a newsletter with one adding public meetings and the other, orientations, as a way to assist.

Figure 3. Assistance needed by Abalone Watch vessel operators and business owners (n=19)



- Twelve of the nineteen responded to ways to improve surveillance, some offering several suggestions. These included in descending order: more patrols (6); more participants (2); public education with pamphlets (1); focus on operators that operate in Gwaii Haanas rather than Skidegate Point (1); updates on suspicious boats or critical areas to watch (1); secure communications (1); signs (1); and penalties (1).

Gwaii Haanas Watchmen operate in base-camps at Skedans, Tanu, Windy Bay, Hotsprings Island or Sgaan Gwaii. Gwaii Haanas Watchmen camps are generally staffed by three persons. Camps have one skiff for general transportation although staff are not required to conduct regular patrols. They focus on reception of visitors and protection of Haida cultural sites. Base-camps operate from mid-June to early September. Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen conduct creel surveys at Langara Island, Naden Harbour, Masset dock and Skidegate Inlet. HFP Watchmen conduct recreational creel surveys from late May to early September. They travel by skiff daily from base-camps to docks where creel surveys are conducted.

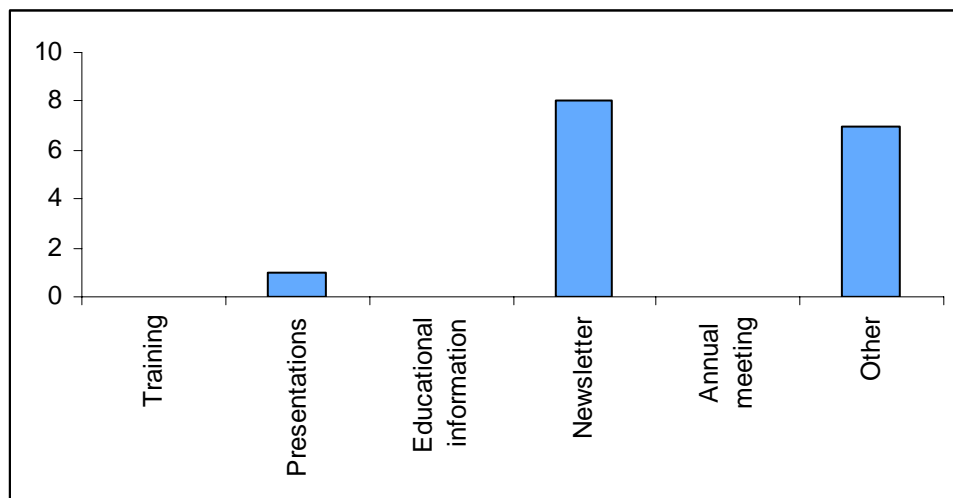
A summary of the Watchmen interviews follows:

- Gwaii Haanas Watchmen spent an average of 57 days at camps. Those spending 45 days or more in camp generally did shifts at two camps.
- Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen expected to spend 90 days each at the base-camps not including time off.
- Two Gwaii Haanas Watchmen said they had observed suspicious behaviour. One had seen an unfamiliar diver. Another had seen a suspicious commercial vessel

that was unfriendly when approached. Neither reported the observation at the time to HFP or DFO staff.

- Both Gwaii Haanas Watchmen gave similar reasons for not reporting: unfamiliarity with the reporting form and lack of secure communications.
- The 15 Watchmen interviewed responded to a list of ways that HBAbs could assist in the coming year (Figure 2). These were, in descending order: newsletter (8), other (6) and presentations (1). Many identified more than one way while one did not respond. The type of presentation identified was a pre-season orientation, which HGAbs has conducted for the past few years. Other activities identified included secure communications (3); commercial opening notices (2); camp visits (1) and information on critical areas (1). Both of the Watchmen who observed suspicious activity, but didn't report it, identified secure communications as a way that HGAbs could assisting Watchmen in the coming year.

Figure 2. Assistance needed by Gwaii Haanas Watchmen (n=15)



- None of the HFP Watchmen had observed suspicious behaviour.
- The five Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen identified a newsletter as a way for HGAbs to assist in the coming year.
- Eleven of the fifteen Watchmen suggested ways to improve community surveillance. They suggested more patrols (10) and secure communication (1).

Watchmen and operators suggested 13 individuals, 3 businesses and 12 general groups of people to contact about participating in Abalone Watch. These included commercial fishers, fishing lodges, ecotourism operators, local charter operators, sports fishers and government agency staff.

The survey results were used to estimate the number of vessel or camp-days coverage as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Estimate of 2005 Abalone Watch Surveillance Effort

Group	# Sites/Operators	Average Period of Operation (days)	Total Coverage (participant-days)
Haida Gwaii Watchmen	5	90	450
Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen	5	90	270
Vessel and Business Operators	49	94	4,606
Total			5,326

Those interviewed were asked how HFP or DFO responded to their reports. There were no responses to this question because no reports had been made.

Summary and Recommendations

The survey provided an estimate of effort in the 2005 Abalone Watch Program of 49 participant-days. A total of 49 vessels or businesses and 10 Watchmen sites (8 base-camps and 2 creel survey sites) and participated in Abalone Watch in 2005. Interviews were conducted with 19 registered operators or businesses and 15 watchmen. We interviewed 39% of all registered vessel operators and businesses.

Two of the 19 vessel of business operators that we interviewed had observed suspicious activity. Also 2 of 15 watchmen had observed some suspicious activity. None of the operators or watchmen had reported the activity. This indicates a need for a better guidance to participants on what to observe and report. Currently participants are provided with an 8 ½“ by 11” handout that includes a description of the information needed and a form to complete.

Following are recommendations for the 2006 program:

- 1) Develop a simpler, more compact Observe, Record, Report guide that summarizes the information needed such as a 3 ½” by 8 ½” card that is more likely to be used;
- 2) Explore opportunities to provide secure communications to Watchmen camps such as satellite phone;

- 3) Increase the frequency of newsletters from once per year to at least twice (spring and fall);
- 4) Conduct a follow-up survey of Abalone Watch participants in the fall of 2006 to estimate effort and maintain contact with volunteers;
- 5) Contact the individuals recommended for participating in Abalone Watch;
- 6) Continue to target presentations at Abalone Watch participants. This would include annual events such as Watchmen orientations, Gwaii Haanas operator meetings and QCI Sports Fish Advisory Board meetings. Develop an eMail list to distribute abalone-related information to Abalone Watch participants.
- 7) Future surveys should assess the months of operation. Based on the primary activities of Abalone Watch participants, it is expected that coverage will be greatest in the summer with slight or spotty coverage during other seasons. This pattern would support the need for directed surveillance or patrols during other parts of the year.

Appendix 1

AbaloneWatch Participant Survey Questions

1. Details of operations
 - a. Primary activity (commercial tourism, commercial fishing, recreational, air charter, other – please describe)
 - b. Secondary activity
 - c. Type of platform (vessel, aircraft, base-camp, other – please describe)
 - d. Number of vessels
 - e. Vessel name(s) or number)
 - f. Vessel length
 - g. Average # of passengers
2. Estimated # of days in Haida Gwaii waters in 2004 (by vessel, aircraft, camp, other)
3. Area of operation in Haida Gwaii
 - a. Primary area
 - b. Secondary area
 - c. Other
4. Did you observe any suspicious activity in Haida Gwaii waters that could be related to abalone poaching?
If so, how many incidents did you observe
5. Did you report any suspicious activity in Haida Gwaii waters?
If so how many incidents were reported.
6. If you did not report suspicious activity what were the reasons.
7. If you did report suspicious activity were you satisfied with the response by either DFO or Haida Fisheries Program. If not please explain and provide information including agency and date of complaint. Do you mind if we provide this information to DFO.
8. Are there any ways that HGAbS could assist you in the coming year
 - a. Training
 - b. Presentations
 - c. Educational information
 - d. Newsletter
 - e. Annual meeting (If yes, then best time of year)
 - f. Other
9. Do you have any suggestions on how community surveillance programs might be improved.
10. Are you aware of anyone else who might be interested in participating in the Abalone Watch Program.