

Date: January 15, 2007



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Sustainable Seafood Choices at Park Board Concessions and Golf Course Clubhouses

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board's Concessions and Golf Course Clubhouses purchase sustainable seafood choices over alternative seafood choices subject to the quality, price and availability being acceptable to the Board;*
- B. THAT the Board sends a letter to their leased restaurants requesting that they continue to purchase sustainable seafood choices whenever possible.*

BACKGROUND

At the Board's Planning Committee meeting of October 17, 2006 the Committee asked staff to prepare a Board report recommending to adjust its seafood purchases in line with the Ocean Wise and SeaChoice programs in the Board's concession and clubhouse system.

DISCUSSION

Staff have reviewed both the Ocean Wise program and the SeaChoice program which follows Canada's Seafood Guide.

Ocean Wise is a voluntary conservation program initiated by the Vancouver Aquarium. It was created to help restaurants and their customers make environmentally friendly seafood choices. There are 48 restaurants currently participating in the program including the Fish House in Stanley Park.

Ocean Wise defines sustainable seafood as:

1. A species that is abundant and resilient to fishing pressures.
2. A species that is well-managed with a comprehensive management plan based on current research.

3. A species that is harvested in a method that ensures limited bycatch on non-target and endangered species.
4. A species that's method of catch ensures there is limited habitat loss associated with the harvesting method.

SeaChoice promotes healthy choices and healthy oceans. Its primary goal is realizing sustainable fisheries in Canada and abroad. It rates seafood choices in three categories; Best, Good or Avoid. Member groups in SeaChoice are the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Ecology Action Centre, the Living Oceans Society and the Sierra Club of Vancouver.

The Board sells seafood at 13 concessions and three golf course clubhouses. The main seafood items on the concession menus are fish and chips, salmonburgers, tuna salad sandwiches and deep fried shrimp (prawns). At the clubhouses other items for sale include salmon fillets and fresh local shrimp.

Salmon burgers made from wild salmon, salmon fillets, local shrimp and canned tuna used for sandwiches are all compliant with the programs.

The items that will be changed for 2007 are Atlantic cod portions used for fish and chips and deep fried shrimp (prawns). Both these items are in the "avoid" category for sustainable seafood.

Atlantic cod stocks are at a low level due to heavy fishing over the past 50 years and the use of bottom-trawling nets that damage undersea habitats. The Board sold approximately 13,000 pounds of Atlantic cod in 2006 and staff has been working with a leading supplier of seafood to the foodservice industry to source an alternative product. Both Alaskan pollock and Pacific cod are in the "best" or "good" categories and were recently sampled in similar portion sizes. Pacific cod proved to be a very acceptable product, the pricing is consistent with Atlantic cod, and the required quantities have been assured for 2007. It will therefore be specified in the Board's tendering process in February and distributors can quote on supplying the Board.

The farmed imported shrimp (prawns) are in the "avoid" category because they generally come from farms converted from tropical coastal mangroves, which destroy habitat for birds, fish and people. These farms also pollute the water, and the farmers move on as they destroy one site to another. The wild prawns are also unacceptable as they are typically caught in trawl nets and this method of fishing is not considered sustainable as other species become trapped in the nets.

In 2007 imported shrimp will be replaced by calamari (squid) on a trial basis on the concession menus. Squid is in the acceptable category, priced competitively and is available from local distributors.

In discussions with our leased restaurant partners most of them comply in principle with the above-mentioned programs and are aware of sustainable choices for seafood on their menus. The Prospect Point Café and the Watermark Restaurant both sell Fish and Chips from their take-out concessions and have indicated their willingness to source alternative seafood that is compliant with the SeaChoice and Ocean Wise programs.

SUMMARY

The Board's concessions and clubhouses are able to purchase sustainable seafood at this time without negatively impacting the quality, price or supply of its menu selections.

Although our leased restaurants are generally in compliance with the Ocean Wise and SeaChoice programs it is recommended to send them a letter outlining the Board's support for these programs and request that they continue to purchase sustainable seafood choices whenever possible.

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