

Review: First Nations summary

First Nations participants met briefly to review a proposed summary of the previous day's discussion for presentation to DFO.

Welcome, introductions, review of agenda

Meeting Co-Chairs: Barry Huber & Marcel Shepert

Huber joined the meeting, offering preliminary comments on the day's agenda. DFO is trying to learn from past mistakes, to build trust and build a new process, he said, not trying to hand-off the dirty work. There is awareness that DFO needs to change and can't do it alone. There will be future years of abundance but this doesn't negate the need for long-term change – this is not a one-shot deal. It's difficult, but everyone is encouraged to work together and to view this as a collaborative process.

Discussion

- Robert Hope, Yale: Is DFO interested in signing an agreement to formalize this relationship? If so, a discussion should be scheduled to start working on a formal agreement. It will require money and commitment and won't be easy. The ball is in DFO's court – if DFO is serious, it must take the next steps. Co-chairs agreed this should be revisited later in the meeting in discussion of next steps.
- Jeff Thomas, Snuneymuxw: First Nations have been through such processes repeatedly over the years with different agencies where all the effort came to nothing. It must be meaningful, with consistency in following through. The lack thereof causes great frustration.
- Randall Lewis, Squamish: DFO needs to address accountability, responsibility and clarify roles. It would be great to include all First Nations, whether or not they're in treaty processes.

DFO staff joined the meeting and participants introduced themselves. Shepert reviewed the proposed agenda and it was agreed to reverse the order of the first two items.

DFO opening comments

Barry Rosenberger, DFO

Rosenberger reviewed the background, including the response to previous shortages of salmon available to meet FSC needs due to low returns in the mid-1990s. This discussion process was initiated in 2008 in response to concerns heard from First Nations last fall, since further shortages were seen as quite likely again for 2008. The working paper that DFO provided for this meeting reflects feedback heard from First Nations. Option 1 reflects what DFO heard at the last meeting April 3. Option 2 builds on an existing paper that addressed past shortages of Early Stuart sockeye. Court cases in the Williams Lake area found DFO had failed to consider the needs of First Nations in terminal areas. Option 3 reflects the approach that DFO took last year, but attempts to respond to a variety of concerns heard. Option 4 proposes a new/different approach. The conservation units and benchmarks prescribed under the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP) are not yet ready, but there is opportunity to develop those in some places.

Discussion

- Q/A: Prince George court cases were heard by Judge Barnett, Williams Lake, early 1990s.

First Nations presentation: June 4 key points

Marcel Shepert

Shepert welcomed DFO's commitment to a long-term solution and the acknowledgement of challenges. The June 4 discussion did not result in full consensus, but was very close. Some participants were just present as observers and others needed to meet with their constituencies, but there was a clear commitment from most participants to keeping this moving forward.

Copies of the draft summary were distributed and Shepert explained key points. First Nations participants do not believe DFO is honouring Sparrow—this was a key concern. There was also agreement that DFO's current approach was not precautionary enough, though some debate about whether or not using the 75% probability forecast instead was preferable.

Participants made it clear this should not just be about a one-off sharing arrangement. First Nations want to take it further if DFO is serious about this, by working towards some sort of watershed agreement. Not everyone was ready to have a First Nations Working Group doing in-season management this year, but it was proposed that a start be made on test driving ideas for a more formal future process. Preconditions include a DFO commitment to a long-term process, working out issues relating to mandate and authority and provision of the necessary budget.

The group discussed how to broaden First Nations participation in existing in-season processes as a starting point. It was felt that Vancouver Island First Nations needed more time to get organized and an extended FRAFS was discussed as a potential mechanism for bringing people together.

Discussion

- James Speck, DMT: We disagreed because we want our own equal representation, not FRAFS.
- Q/A: Participants clarified that reference in the summary was to the upcoming Vancouver Island meeting of the First Nations Fisheries Council.
- DFO: Does a “watershed wide” approach include marine approaches? / Shepert: Yes. There was agreement that it should be inclusive, whether an extension of FRAFS or another group.
- Speck: This group does not speak for the rest of Vancouver Island. There is need for separate, equal representation from both sides.
- Thomas: A challenge facing Vancouver Island First Nations is the funding to get organized.
- Wilfred Hunt, Kwakiutl: Nimpkish band does not represent the Kwakiutl.
- Ken Malloway, Sto:lo: Fraser sockeye allocations to the approach tribes have grown significantly, in part because their rivers are empty. This is causing concern among Fraser First Nations, especially with regard to potential treaty allocations. We're not saying we don't want to share, but we want to know what DFO is doing to bring back systems like the Nimpkish, so that we're not left fighting over shrinking shares of a shrinking pie. All the discussion is focused on Fraser sockeye but we need to make the pie bigger and we need to know what is being done to bring back the Vancouver Island systems.
- Not everyone on Vancouver Island has access to sockeye.
- Shepert: one of the objectives in creating a Working Group is to facilitate such discussions about how to rebuild systems and wean people off such dependence on Fraser sockeye.
- Randy Daniels, Malahat: We support the need to restore rivers and fisheries on the island.

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- Lewis: We appreciate this discussion with DFO. The Squamish are doing much restoration work in their territory, working with local stakeholders (e.g. recreational) and have agreed to reduce their own chinook fisheries locally to support conservation. So it is very discouraging to learn of a major sport chinook derby planned for just outside Vancouver. We are also enumerating our own catch. What due diligence will DFO do regarding this derby? Respect for Sparrow, priority access and consultation are key requirements for a meaningful relationship.
- Sid Quinn, Sechelt: Regarding efforts to rebuild Sakinaw Lake sockeye, we had one of the largest counts to date (15,000) and 100,000 outgoing smolts, which is very good. But we only saw one wild adult returning to the lake. Awareness and efforts to avoid impacts is critical. What is being done to reduce chinook by-catch in Alaska's Pollock fishery? We don't hear about these issues from DFO – we found out about this in a recreational newsletter. Better communication with First Nations is also needed.

DFO response

Barry Rosenberger

DFO understands that this is all draft and that these discussions are without prejudice to existing rights and title. Regarding Sparrow, DFO is working to become consistent with all laws and court rulings. Clearly, interpretations appear to differ so this is something that needs discussions. Legal opinions differ so it's not black and white. Regarding the need to be more conservative, DFO is looking at a range of possibilities for the coming season. But discussion is needed on what it actually means in practice to be more conservative and how to do that.

DFO agrees that this is not just about catch sharing but fisheries management. We feel DFO is taking some big steps and the AAROM program provides a key tool for bringing people together. Questions include how sub-regional AAROM groups would work with individual bands and/or other bodies; the future role of FRAFS, which to date has focused on facilitation and technical support; and how to actually manage fisheries. DFO has some money, but we need to work out how to do it and how these things link together.

DFO also sees this as a long-term process. We won't fix it in one year—we must define the issues and tackle it step by step. It's not DFO's problem – it's a collective issue. The status quo is not acceptable but DFO gets conflicting advice, so how to deal with that? We think it should be done collectively. The need for authority and mandate is also understood. It must be clarified how to ensure that First Nations reps have a mandate and support/agreement from their communities and there are many choices regarding ways to move this forward.

Current appointments to the Fraser Panel are up for renewal and DFO is looking at issues re First Nations representation. Bilateral sessions are open and technology may provide ways to expand access, so we should look at that. The role of FRAFS and its staff in providing technical information may also provide opportunities to expand access for Vancouver Island First Nations. Some things can be built on this year. There are many questions regarding Vancouver Island but DFO staff are already working on this and there are opportunities to move ahead on some things.

On concerns about the Alaskan Pollock fishery, DFO is working on this but the bycatch concerns are not covered under existing treaties. Regarding derbies, DFO does not sanction these but staff do monitor all fisheries and enforce rules. Much work is being done on restoration, though not on every stream, and yes, it's got to be about more than fisheries.

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Discussion

- Lewis: Does recreational monitoring include a record of all fish caught? Due diligence is required in terms of how much is being intercepted vs. returns to spawning grounds.
 - Rosenberger: Some guides provide log info daily. There is also dockside monitoring, etc. Monitoring varies among different fisheries and depends on impacts vs. costs. The goal is to provide estimates for all fisheries.
- Malloway: Sport licences should be specific to each system, with licence revenues reinvested in those specific systems. First Nations should have a bigger role re sport licences issued in their territories, as in Haida Gwaii.
- Rocky Wilson: Everyone here agrees that DFO is not adhering to the Supreme Court of Canada decision on Sparrow. What other decisions, if any, is DFO relying on in its approach to implementing Sparrow?
 - Rosenberger: There were requests that DFO close all sport and commercial fisheries until FSC needs were met. DFO's response, which is felt to be consistent with court rulings, was that those sectors would bear the brunt of but not all closures.
 - Malloway: The Supreme Court said that should occur after FSC needs are met—DFO can't take one sentence out of context.
- Gord McEachen, DFO: DFO is encouraged by interest among Vancouver Island First Nations in getting together. Funding is available to build capacity and fund travel costs, etc so staff look forward to discussing what is possible.
- Mel Kotyk, DFO: DFO is encouraged by the response and urges people to consider the potential role of AAROM funds. There is already evidence that this dialogue has helped to build mutual understanding of issues between coastal and upriver First Nations. Ultimately, such dialogue can go even broader, with processes like Sigurdson Stuart that enable dialogue with other sectors and ways to build understanding of each others' fisheries. DFO recognizes the need for more catch monitoring and initiatives are underway with support from PICFI.
- Shepert: The message from DFO is that money is available to build a process for Vancouver Island, which puts the ball back in the court of First Nations. Broader dialogue with other sectors is important though not the focus for today.
- Thomas: The sport fishery has been a frustration for a long time. If we see sport fishing happening off Nanaimo, we're going fishing. First Nations and DFO need to work through the concerns relating to the sport fishery.
- Chris Cook, Namgis: Much attention was devoted to concerns about the recreational fishery in these meetings. If there is a hook in the water, the message is that there is no conservation concern. We stress that this is a key concern.

FN summary: response to DFO options

Shepert asked participants to focus on the three key unanswered questions regarding what to do in 2008: 1) How to share available harvest if situations arise in which all FSC needs can't be met because of low abundance and conservation targets; 2) What to do about conservation concerns re certain stocks which may limit access to more abundant stocks; and 3) what advice can be offered on an in-season process to respond to unforeseen circumstances that arise.

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Shepert then reviewed the second portion of the draft summary document, outlining key points of discussion among First Nations the previous day in response to the four proposed options in DFO's Working Paper. It was noted that these were not so much exclusive or distinct options as potential tools or approaches, certain aspects of which might be used alone or in combination with each other to address situations that arise.

Summarizing, Shepert said there was general support for moving ahead to confirm a First Nations management body, but recognition that this could not happen in time for 2008. More discussion is needed in terms of next steps as to how that would unfold, and perhaps starting to test drive certain aspects, with a view to trying to get something in place for 2009. There was also broad support for the idea of seeking ways that were fair and equitable to get fish back up to the headwaters. Participants discussed the concept of a "sliding scale" approach, depending on the seriousness of the shortage and availability of other species. On the issue of regional equity, participants noted that First Nations see themselves as nations, not sub-regional bodies. There was also support for the concept of rewards for avoiding mixed stock fisheries, where this was feasible. But it was made clear that if First Nations agree to abandon traditional spots to facilitate equitable solutions in years of low abundance, it doesn't mean they abandon rights to traditional fishing locations. Option 3, and the concept of basing shares on numbers in the communal licences was not supported, and participants preferred to see other approaches used instead.

Several participants in the June 4 discussions made it clear that they were just there to listen and were not signaling their support or intent to participate, while others noted the need to consult with constituencies before committing to anything.

Discussion

- Rosenberger: Clarify the expressed support for balancing harvest vs. opposition to Option 3 and sharing based on communal licences or sub-regional allocations. How is balance achieved? Also how do you start test driving this?
 - Shepert: Participants discussed the idea of First Nations coming together to exchange information on the status of their fisheries and also discussing planning.
- DFO: Clarify the "sliding scale" concept.
 - Shepert: There was not complete agreement re the concept of a "fish basket". If only a limited number of fish return to natal areas, the idea is that a share of those be reserved for people upriver who have no alternatives and if necessary that others get part of their allocations from elsewhere.
- Cook: I don't have the mandate to approve this – that should be noted in the draft summary.
 - Shepert: The summary clearly states this is draft and requires mandate, authority, etc.
 - Murray Ross. Secwepemc FC: This is just a summary of the June 4 discussion. There is no formal resolution or commitment.
 - Cook: The concern is that past temporary agreements were made permanent by DFO
 - Malloway: Participants worked really hard to come up with this.
- Shepert urged a focus on defining next steps, with the understanding that this was about building something long-term, so that participants could leave with a clear understanding of the mandate they need to seek re budget, timelines, actions and goals.

Discussion: clarifications, outstanding questions

Following a caucus break, participants reconvened.

Shepert proposed that the goals for 2008 would be to start test driving these ideas by expanding Thursday in-season conference calls to include all First Nations (coast to upriver) who want to listen in. This discussion does not cover fishing plans; it's just sharing of data on returns and fishing that has taken place. The second aspect would be the opportunity for First Nations to exchange information about what's happening with their own fisheries in-season, in an informal way. Meanwhile, participants should take the discussion paper and notes back to their communities to seek a mandate to participate further. Shepert clarified that there was no mandate regarding a process for 2008 to halt fisheries in-season to address sharing needs if abundance is insufficient.

- Les Jantz, DFO: If First Nations have views on how they want DFO to proceed in-season, it's important to have a way for them to be able to communicate that to DFO.
 - Shepert: There are First Nations reps on the Fraser Panel, but no agreement on a formal process or sign-off on a way to do that at this time.
- Rosenberger: The interest appears to focus on longer-term solutions. AAROM funds are available and existing processes could be built on. DFO would encourage a group to continue discussion on how to bring these things together and create the needed links. There are technical needs, information needs and future links to be worked out so that people can have options to take back to their constituencies and seek a mandate. It would be valuable to work on this over summer and get something ready by fall. What questions could this group start working on?
- Lewis: The Squamish are not in the treaty process, so how do you deal with First Nations that are in and out of treaties.
 - Shepert: The inter-tribal treaty process is a different issue from the BC treaty process.
- Huber reviewed the list of current AAROM bodies in the Fraser watershed, including FRAFS, which serves the watershed as a whole, providing information and technical support, with two reps each from the upper, mid and lower Fraser and two from DFO. There is also the new First Nations Fisheries Council, the inter-tribal treaty and potentially a different future role for FRAFS. There are many open questions and options regarding how these might all fit together.
 - Ross: There are too many processes—convergence is a key need. FRAFS could look at opportunities for convergence, e.g. with the upcoming intertribal treaty process meeting. The First Nations Fisheries Council could focus on high-level policy vs. getting involved in watershed level management (role re mediating conflicts?).
- Shepert: Convergence was also a key theme at Visions this year. Who will do the work?
 - Ross: We wish to be part of the Working Group. The next step should be to develop a rolling draft proposal for a long-term process, with a work plan added next year when things are clearer.
 - Andersen Behn: Agreed. Discussions are underway among Vancouver Island First Nations—it should be clear how they fit with that process.
 - Barry Huber and Marcel Shepert will serve as the key liaisons between First Nations and DFO.

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- Huber: There have been suggestions re representation along linguistic lines.
- Rosenberger: These are questions for the working group. This group will not be asked to make allocation decisions for 2008 but to come up with proposals about who will make decisions in future years and how things link together.
 - Ross: Agreed. This group will scope things out. The eventual decision makers will likely be different people. Similar questions arise in the intertribal process. How do First Nations want to represent themselves? It can't always be linguistic groups. It may have to be 12 – 20 people and that may take time to work out.
 - Andersen Behn: On representation, it may be best to take baby steps, moving to something bigger by February. (The FNFC has a mandate to bring forward ideas from local meetings underway to an assembly in February 2009.)
- Tracy Sampson, Nicola Tribal Council: If DFO is serious about moving to co-management and is asking First Nations to do all this work to build a group that can make decisions in-season, DFO should put something in writing up front. DFO is working on a long term vision with the recreational community, but issues are being addressed year-to-year with First Nations.
 - Rosenberger: In building this, it might be useful to include a mix of technical people and leaders. DFO wants to build this with First Nations rather than to dictate.
 - Cook: Balanced representation will be important so that all groups feel heard. The group must play a meaningful role. Key challenges include how to bring groups and processes together.
- Ross: Assuming we can do all this work, First Nations want some assurance that this board would be recognized. How much say would such a body have?
 - Rosenberger: If there was a functioning body this year and it proposed dividing available harvest a certain way, certainly the Minister would listen. DFO obviously has a role in conservation and the bounds of the various roles are not fixed. If there is consensus, then there is a strong voice, but DFO has to make decisions if there is no agreement. The clearer that First Nations are able to express direction among themselves, the clearer DFO's role will be. DFO would also be interested in advice regarding recreational and commercial fisheries, enhancement and habitat and in how to improve decisions. DFO still has a role, and so does the Minister, but if advice is received it will be heard. It's a negotiation.
- Gord Sterritt, Northern Shuswap TC: This isn't just about FSC but about other fisheries that affect our fisheries. How open is DFO to more than advice and to a First Nations role in management of fisheries?
 - Rosenberger: You have to be at the table to be part of management. DFO is looking for input on how much First Nations need for their fisheries, though things are not at that step yet. In the end, no one gets a veto over each other's fisheries.
- Kotyk: The message is that there is interest in developing a group and a management strategy, possibly using the existing working group with a few additions to start a draft document for circulation on how First Nations can come together in a watershed group, and to try to put this into place for 2009. There are questions about how this would be funded, mandate, representation but we are hearing willingness from First Nations and definitely from DFO on this. We are not hearing about what we should do in 2008.

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- Cook: The fish are already here. I want to fish, but I want to make sure upriver First Nations also get their fish. The fish are all mixed in Johnston Strait, so how do we know when the stocks of concern that the Sewepemc spoke about are mixed in there? We want to increase our understanding of each other's fisheries. How will we start talking about this in-season? How do we get people together? We will need to be able to talk 24/7 to avoid major problems or wipe the run out. There is need for a regional process and someone representing First Nations who can talk to DFO.
- Malloway: We understand that if we have no plan, the fallback is Option 3. On representation, we don't mind additional people as long as it's manageable and it's not clear how linguistic groups would be manageable. We've made a lot of progress, despite not having a clear answer for DFO for 2008.
- Brian Assu, FN Marine Society: We plan to wait for the IFMP and final Fraser Panel and then develop our fishing plan. There is no AAROM body yet for the East Coast of Vancouver Island. If one is created, not everyone will be part of it. How do they fit in? Not all Fraser First Nations are in AAROM bodies either.
- Shepert: We can arrange the in-season conference calls via FRAFS, add a rep for the Secwepemc to the existing working group and start working on questions that DFO raised.
- Andersen Behn: Propose also adding a Sechelt rep. Next steps include developing a working paper on definitions, structures, budget and questions and to present proposed terms of reference to a post season plenary for people to take back to their communities.
- Sid Quinn, Sechelt: Regarding what to do for 2008, the concern is that using proportional reductions again will be unfair. That could close us as individual First Nations before we even start fishing because some arbitrary group that we've been placed in has met its target. DFO must treat us as individual First Nations. No one minds sharing but last year's approach did not work and all First Nations need a reasonable opportunity to fish in their territories.
 - Rosenberg: All feedback on what did or didn't work last year is welcome and helpful.
- Clarification: First Nations reps on the Fraser Panel represent Canada, not any First Nations.

Discussion: proposed next steps

Rosenberger recapped proposed next steps: Expand the working group, which will work on a rolling draft, proposed management structure, mandates, etc. The group will not try to represent anyone re fisheries decisions for this summer. DFO has not settled on Option 3 but is still looking for feedback before a final decision is made. The short-term plan also includes broadening the current Fraser Panel discussions, with a mechanism to allow others to listen in on the Thursday calls. Paul will work on that as the lead on the Fraser Panel. Mike Staley will provide technical updates to an expanded group and that will be followed by discussions to improve understanding of each other's fisheries. First Nations will then use that information to deal with DFO in bilateral discussions. DFO would like to participate in those Thursday calls to ensure staff is in synch in terms of the information and understanding, but DFO reps can step out if First Nations want to caucus privately.

DFO also heard in the discussion paper and other comments that there is a need to address management of weaker stocks and more feedback is sought on whether there is support for amalgamating several options to facilitate that.

- Shepert: Having a DFO rep on the calls would improve understanding of FN issues.

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- Cook: While there's no solution for 2008, this group has had success in getting /staying together. We would like a Vancouver Island meeting to share the information with others, perhaps with reps from the Working Group to give an update on what has been discussed. The important thing is to keep this moving and broaden First Nations participation.
- Sterritt: Having DFO on the calls to stay abreast is fine, but not to be defensive.
- Sampson: Agreed. For this season, the NTA has developed a conservation harvest management plan. Has DFO reviewed such plans and considered them in planning? As others have stated, if recreational hooks hit the water, it will trigger certain actions.
 - Rosenberger: Yes, DFO has looked at those things.
- Quinn: Guidelines and structure, including a code of conduct and agenda, would be helpful to avoid the calls becoming a free-for-all.
- Shepert: Agreed. Calls should be chaired. Are there comments re DFO's second question on how to protect weak stocks to allow fish for upriver First Nations with no alternatives?
 - Sterritt: The discussion was not just about defaulting to Option 3. The idea is for DFO to consider an amalgamation of all options to make it work, for example, taking advantage of opportunities for alternatives to ease pressure on the main-stem Fraser.
- Quinn: It's important not to overlook stocks like Sakinaw and for other First Nations to be aware of such stocks passing through their fisheries. Better information on other stock that are returning would be useful.
- Agreed working group name: First Nations Fraser Fisheries Interim Working Group.

2008 salmon update

Les Jantz, DFO

Jantz recapped the 2008 salmon outlook, as revised in April (see attached PPT and outlook document for more details). Key points included the following:

Coho: outlook for all stock groups indicates conservation concerns.

Chum: status near target for all three stocks, despite concern over age-4 returns, so fishing opportunities are expected.

Pinks: off cycle year for Fraser pinks; no predictions for Squamish; Area 11-13 and W Georgia Strait are low to near target.

Pacific Salmon Treaty renewal discussions have just been completed. The Chinook deal includes a 15% reduction in the SE Alaska AABM fishery; a 30% reduction in the WCVI AABM fishery; \$59 million in funding, primarily from the US, for implementation; additional provisions to protect weak stocks; and potential for further reductions in Alaskan and Northern BC harvests if certain stocks don't meet rebuilding targets.

Discussion

- Q/A: The treaty does not address Chinook bycatch in Alaska's pollock fishery but other discussions are underway with the goal of having measures implemented by next summer.
- Quinn: The issue is how such information is/isn't being communicated to First Nations

Fraser sockeye update

Chilko run timing is projected to be earlier than average, with the peak in Area 20 on July 28 vs. August 3, due to cooler water. The diversion rate prediction is for 29% through Johnstone Strait, which is below levels seen in recent years. This will be reviewed in early July.

Early Stuart run timing will be available in 10 days.

Early summer forecast was revised downward (mostly Pitt and Bowron), which reduces TAC at run sizes below the 50% probability forecast.

It has been decided to continue to use [Total Allowable Mortality] TAM Rule Option 2 for the early summers

The final bilateral Fraser Panel preseason planning meeting will be next week.

The 50% p forecast produces Canadian TAC of 1.25 million, with about 0.7 million available [for harvest] at the 75% p forecast. But depending on how stocks of concern are addressed, this could result in actual harvests far below the TAC.

ACTION: Copy of Les Jantz presentation and revised outlook to be distributed with minutes

Discussion

- Sampson: Why is DFO allowing recreational fisheries for coho and chinook if all are at risk?
 - Jeff Grout, DFO: Coho rec fisheries are mostly for marked fish, with some terminal opportunities for unmarked. All rec fisheries are listed in the IFMP appendices.
- Dave Levy: Does earlier Chilko migration mean all the rest will be earlier or does it mean more overlap?
 - Jantz: The expectation is that all will be earlier but staff will re-assess in season.
- Assu: What are the recent diversion rates for early summers?
 - Jantz: The typical pattern is increasing diversion as the season progresses; 29% is lower than levels seen in recent years.
- Quinn: Determination of TAC for late-run sockeye is confusing
 - Jantz: The method changes from year to year. In off cycles, there are too few fish to do in-season updates; the approach has been to manage such that fisheries may occur when stocks of concern constitute less than 10% of the stock mixture. That same rule was applied to early summers last year, and this is what causes the “bookends” that can restrict access to TAC on more abundant summer run stocks.
- Cook: What is the fishing impact on coho stocks? Rec fisheries are happening 24/7.
 - Jantz: Canadian exploitation was estimated at 2% last year, based on estimated effort

Chinook forecast

Jeff Grout, DFO

The 2008 outlook is poor for Fraser River Age-5 spring and summer Chinook, due to low marine survival for fish that entered the ocean in 2005. Additional measures were not planned initially, but cumulative catch rate in the Albion test fishery to May 31 is the lowest on record since 1981 and 50% less than the previous low in 2005. Escapement for 2007 declined to levels not seen

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since the 1970s and was less than half the PST target. A methodology for setting WSP benchmarks is expected to be completed in 2008. New research shows a strong correlation between the cumulative CPUE in the Albion test fishery vs. terminal runs and spawning escapement of Age-5 Chinook. Catch to date at Albion indicates terminal run in the range of 44,000 and estimated spawning escapement of 25,000. There is currently no CWT indicator stock data available to clearly define fishery-specific harvest rates, marine survival and overall exploitation rates for Age-5 spring and summer Chinook. Assessments rely on assembling data from a variety of sources. Estimated run timing past Albion: 21% by June 21; 52% by July 12; and 93% by August 9.

DFO has identified three proposed management zones [levels] and is seeking feedback on management at each level: Zone 1 would be for predicted spawner abundance over 30,050; Zone 2 for abundance between 24,040 and 30,050; and Zone 3 for levels below 24,040.

Management options would be guided by key principles in the allocation policy; with conservation first, then First Nations FSC needs, then recreational, then commercial. Allocation guidelines start with non-retention for all sectors at the lowest levels. The next level allows some by-catch or incidental retention for First Nations only. The next stage allows directed First Nations fisheries and bycatch/incidental retention for recreational and commercial. Directed fisheries for recreational and then commercial fisheries would be permitted at the next two stages of abundance. The in-season management approach will include weekly estimates based on Albion CPUE data, and shifts between the identified management zones will be based on in-season estimates, with 10% buffer to mitigate impacts. Next steps include consultation with all sectors regarding the proposed approach.

Discussion

- Lewis: How could DFO allow a recreational derby if chinook are in such dire straits?
 - Grout: DFO can use various tools, such as length restrictions, bag limits and time and area closures to protect Age-5 fish as necessary.
 - Lewis: Communication needs to happen to prevent this sort of thing.
- Cook: If we're discussing a working relationship, we will need concrete information and input on recreational fisheries in our rivers.
 - Grout: DFO looks at expected impacts and has tools to adjust harvest if necessary; sport fisheries will be affected by measures if necessary. Funds from the new PST will help improve the CWT program and information base to allow better decisions.
- Staley: Is any change foreseen to First Nations fishing plans?
 - Rosenberger: DFO will come back if any changes are needed.

Next steps

Rosenberger expressed appreciation for the input and progress made and hoped for continued progress. DFO staff intends to work with the Interim Working Group over the summer as it drafts a paper on proposed terms of reference, budgets, etc, plus to implement the initial changes to expand the Thursday conference calls and the Fraser Panel bilateral processes, as discussed. The notetaker will e-mail draft notes to everyone, and participants will be asked to list all comments and proposed edits in an accompanying document.

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Appendix 1: Participants: DFO-FN meeting June 5, 2008

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Draft notes: DFO/First Nations meeting on Fraser salmon fisheries

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