



FRASER RIVER ABORIGINAL FISHERIES SECRETARIAT

c/o Nicola Tribal Association
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March 31, 2016

Rebecca Reid,
Regional Director-General,
Department of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard,
Vancouver, B.C.

VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT

RE: MARCH 8-10 2016 FORUM ON CONSERVATION AND HARVEST PLANNING, NANAIMO, BC

Dear Rebecca Reid,

Thank you for your March 16, 2016 correspondence, which outlined DFO's response to the January 2016 Forum. The second annual Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning took place March 8 – 10th 2016 in Nanaimo, BC. Forum attendees travelled from the Marine Approach and Fraser River areas to participate in, or observe the event. The following summary outlines the key points of discussion raised by the First Nation participants and associated actions requested of the Department.

Sockeye:

More time is needed to review the Draft Salmon IFMP for Southern BC and gain a better understanding of the implications of the Department's proposed 2 Options, and proposed LAER's to First Nation harvest opportunities. Participants will work to bring all of the information and discussion points back to their communities. **No recommendations from First Nation participants to the Department on Fraser sockeye escapement options were made and these will need to be considered at the next Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning, April 5 – 7, 2016 in Kamloops.** The following points are included for information sharing.

Early Stuart sockeye stocks: Participants agreed on the need to conserve Early Stuart sockeye, but further discussion is still needed to determine whether to propose management based on the p25 forecast abundance, which would mean an allowable incidental harvest of up to 2200 early Stuart sockeye. Starting the season planning for a forecast return abundance of 22,000 salmon (p25) would mean fewer opportunities for some fishers this season. It was proposed that participants review the implications of proposing planning fisheries under the assumption that 22,000 Early Stuarts will return (p25).

The need to reduce test fishing on Early Stuarts was raised, like last year, and there were some calls for increased enforcement to reduce illegal harvest.



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Early Summer sockeye stocks: The implications of adding a 4th week to the 3-week Early Stuart window closure in order to hopefully protect some of the earlier-timed, weaker Early Summer sockeye stocks were briefly discussed.

Lates sockeye stocks: Fisheries management options (window closures, reduced LAER) to try and reduce impacts to weak Lates stocks were discussed.

Chinook

At the January 2016 Forum, participants requested that the Joint Technical Working Group be provided with the information (data and associated uncertainties) they need in time to review and prepare for future forums. Specifically: 1. DNA analysis results from the 2014 Juan de Fuca recreational fishery, 2. An opportunity to assess Coded Wire Tag data for Dome creek, and 3. A technical review of the summer 4(1) group was requested.

1. The JTWG has since been provided with the DNA analysis results from the 2014 Juan de Fuca recreational fishery. It's very helpful that the data were shared at this stage of development, and the JTWG has been collaboratively working to error check the data over the past few weeks. Based on the draft data set, it appears that a large percentage of the 2014 Juan de Fuca recreational harvest came from recreational fisheries targeted on Chinook stocks with a "low" stock Outlook for this season (ex. Spring and Summer 5(2)). This information is extremely informative, and will help First Nation participants to develop recommendations for fisheries planning this season.

2. The Coded Wire Tag data for Dome Creek and Nicola River both remain an on-going discussion. Questions remain as to reconciling some of the information and analysis, and alternative methods of analyzing the data have not yet been completed.

3. A technical review of the Fraser Summer 4(1) management group has been requested. **ACTIONS REQUIRED FOR 2016 FISHING SEASON: Please provide a summary of the Total Mortality Distribution of Fraser Summer Chinook 4(1) at the Forum in April. Although significant information has been provided with respect to escapements, this is only part of the management picture. A full discussion of the methods and data used to describe fisheries impacts in freshwater and marine areas is needed as part of the review.** For Fraser Summer 4(1) Chinook, the Department outlined in the Draft IFMP that "care will be taken to ensure that overall fisheries impacts are not increased in 2016". **This statement requires clarification from DFO.** It's been forecast that many sockeye stocks will return in low numbers this season, and opportunities for many First Nations' to harvest sockeye will be limited. Opportunities for First Nations to harvest Chinook will be particularly important. **Please consider increased Chinook FSC opportunities within the plan to "not increase overall fisheries impacts" this season.**



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During Tier 2 presentations, the Department asked forum participants “Is it time for a review of our management approach in recent years (e.g. over the last 5 years) to understand the effectiveness of management actions that have been implemented?”

At the last Forum in January 2016, First Nations participants requested **a full review of the methods, calculations and data used by the Department to support current Chinook management measures.** Building on this existing request, the JTWG has now committed to collaborate with the Department in order to jointly plan for an overall review which would first reconcile existing data sets, and then work together to review the Chinook management approach over the next few years. Initially, it appears that at least some of the recent management actions may have led to a substantially greater reduction in harvest rate than anticipated, and a collaborative review of the management approach is warranted.

Coho

There was a sense of frustration at the long-term trend of low abundance. An inability to meet Section 35(1) needs would be a “key consideration” to take into account during management planning. General concerns were raised, such as the lack of data and inability to separate Interior Fraser Coho from Lower Fraser Coho, and overall lack of clarity on models used to manage Coho impacts. **ACTION REQUIRED FOR 2016 FISHING SEASON: Focused, well-resourced, collaborative, bilateral assessment of coho data and models should occur.**

Chum/Steelhead planning

A collaborative approach among First Nations, Federal and Provincial groups to assessing impacts to Steelhead was supported and the Province has agreed to meet with the JTWG in April, prior to the Forum. This is viewed as a positive step to greater engagement with respect to Steelhead management. **ACTION REQUIRED FOR 2016 FISHING SEASON: Continued collaboration with First Nations on the Provincial Steelhead model as well as the Department’s impact assessment model for chum fisheries through attendance at JTWG and the FRAFS EC.**

Chum: A suggestion was made that the Commercial Salmon Allocation Framework (CSAF) should treat Fraser Chum as a single unit and allocation be based on total TAC, regardless of where the fish are caught. This would allow for allocation transfers from marine fisheries to in-river fisheries.

Ocean Science

The M.P. from Vancouver Quadra, Joyce Murray, forwarded an email request to the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat, among other fisheries organizations, seeking input to an email request sent out by Hunter Tootoo, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard. The request was for input on how the Department proceeds with its platform commitment to re-invest forty million dollars back into science within the Department. Specifically: *“We will also directly invest in ocean science...We will restore that [\$40 million] funding so that we can protect the health of our fish stocks,*



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monitor contaminants and pollution in our oceans, and support responsible and sustainable aquaculture industries on our coasts”, “We will restore \$1.5M in federal funding for freshwater research [...] and make new investments in Canada’s world-leading IISD Experimental Lakes Area”

Tier 1 discussion provided suggestions on priorities for the funds, and a separate letter has been sent to Minister Hunter Tootoo in response to this request, on behalf of the First Nation Caucus of the FRAFS EC and the participants at the Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning, March 2016.

We look forward to a thoughtful response by the Department to this letter. The Forum meetings comprise the first steps in what should be a multi-step consultation process about DFO’s stock and harvest management plans that could potentially affect the exercise of aboriginal fishing rights. Documentation of feedback between forum participants and the Department is an important step in this process.

Sincerely,

Ken Malloway,

Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat, Chairperson

On behalf of the First Nation participants at the March 8-10 2016 Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning, held in Nanaimo BC

CC:

*First Nation Fisheries Council
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