

First Nations Fisheries Council: 2009 Fisheries Assembly Update & Follow Up

By Brenda McCorquodale, Executive Director, First Nations Fisheries Council

The First Nations Fisheries Council held the 2009 Fisheries Assembly in Nanaimo on February 25 & 26. A diverse group of leaders, elders, technicians, and community members passionate about fish came out to provide important input into the dialogue on the future mandate, structure, and function of the Council. The focus of the two-day meeting was to set the direction for the future of the Fisheries Council, and a set of recommendations were approved at the Assembly by consensus. The recommendations were also passed by resolution at the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit meetings following the Assembly.

Mandate

The following new mandate was supported: The First Nations Fisheries Council works with and on behalf of B.C. First Nations to protect and reconcile First Nations rights and title as they relate to fisheries and the health and protection of aquatic resources. The Council will achieve this mandate by working to:

- Advance and protect First Nations title and rights related to fisheries and aquatic resources, including priority access for food, cultural and economic purposes;
- Support First Nations to build and maintain capacity related to fishing, planning, policy, law, management, and decision-making at a variety of scales (local, regional, national, international); and

• Facilitate discussions related to the development of a British Columbia-wide First Nations-based collaborative management framework that recognizes and respects First Nations jurisdiction, management authority and responsibilities.

Structure

The proposed new structure of the Council includes:

- Membership – which will meet in an annual Assembly to which each of B.C.'s 203 First Nations will appoint delegates.
- Executive – which will be comprised of representatives who will be selected by the First Nations in each of 14 Regions in B.C., through whatever means they deem appropriate, and with the support and assistance of the Fisheries Council in making their appointments. This will result in a Coastal and Interior caucus.
- Directors – which will include 6 people appointed from and by the Executive. These will include two (2) co-chairs (one from the Coast and one from the Interior) and four (4) Directors with portfolio (two from the Coast and two from the Interior).

Regions

The Regions recommended are designed to be flexible, to meet a number of objectives as outlined in the "Mandate, Structure, and Function" discussion paper (available on the FNFC website), and to support the movement

to a Nation-based approach. The 14 proposed regions are: North Coast, Haida Gwaii, Central Coast, Northern Vancouver Island, South-East Vancouver Island, West Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland/Lower Fraser, Fraser Valley, Mid-Fraser East, Mid-Fraser West, Upper Fraser, Upper Skeena, Transboundary-Yukon, and Transboundary-Columbia.

Next Steps

The Council is currently working with First Nations Fisheries organizations to develop an implementation plan for the new Council structure that meets the needs of communities. We are looking for feedback as to how quickly Regions will be able to appoint new members to the Council.

The process of appointing a member to the Council will need to include: a description of the First Nations within a Region; a plan to engage these First Nations in a process to appoint, elect, or otherwise select a Council appointee; a conflict resolution mechanism. The Council is looking for feedback as to what First Nations in the various Regions need in terms of help or support to facilitate the Council appointments.

A March Communique from the Council will be available next week on the website at www.FNFisheriesCouncil.ca. For more information please contact Executive Director Brenda McCorquodale at: (778) 835-2496 or Brenda@FNFisheriesCouncil.ca.

Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon Update

After review of the technical memo submitted to the Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Committee (FWJTC), the First Nations participating in the Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon agreed to the following recommendations/comments and presented them to DFO at the bilateral Forum session in Nanaimo on March 11, 2009.

1. DFO work with First Nations technical groups to implement recommendations as identified in the report "An Action Plan in Response to Coded Wire Tag (CWT) Expert Panel Recommendations". This will address the issue of improved information for recreational fisheries.
2. No partial size selective or mark selective

fisheries since it will undermine the CWT program unless issues in the above report are addressed.

3. There needs to be further dialogue on how the implementation of the allocation policy is implemented (Sparrow versus Gladstone court case interpretation).
4. DFO work with First Nations to move towards an area-based approach to recreational fisheries.
5. Coastal First Nations are closely connected with their commercial licenses and access to salmon for FSC purposes.
6. First Nations expect DFO to implement Option 1 for recreational fisheries management actions effective immediately this year and for the 2009/10 IFMP.

MEETING NOTICE

FORUM ON CONSERVATION AND HARVEST PLANNING FOR FRASER SALMON

Tuesday April 7 & Wednesday April 8

Best Western Richmond Hotel &
Convention Centre

7511 Westminster Highway, Richmond
RESERVATIONS: 604-273-7878

To subscribe or submit content, contact: Aimee Arsenault, Communications Coordinator

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