

FRAFS UPDATE

By Marcel Shepert, Executive Director FRAFS

I am pleased to announce that the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat (FRAFS) is functioning once again. FRAFS has moved to a new location; it is now located in Merritt, with the Nicola Tribal Association.

The FRAFS has not been fully operational since April 1st, 2005. As a consequence FRAFS was unable to provide communications and coordination functions. However, that doesn't mean it wasn't working. On the contrary, Ken Wilson, Pete Nicklin, Mike Staley, and I have continued on working within our respective roles. The only difference has been that we, the contractors, haven't been able to communicate with the rest of the watershed as effectively as we have in the past. It was difficult to communicate without the web site updated, or without the Watershed Talk newsletter. These tools are now back and we will begin updating regularly.

Before I begin with the current update, I would like to acknowledge, once again the great work and support provided by the last host, The Secwepemc Fisheries Commission (SFC). The SFC was the original home of FRAFS and was maintained for over 10 years, on behalf of all participating Fraser First Nations.

Thank you SFC for a job well done.

Equally important is acknowledgment of the Nicola Tribal Association (NTA) for taking on the activities of FRAFS; it is not easy to coordinate the operations of FRAFS and some might argue a thankless job, so many thanks to leadership for taking it on.

Currently FRAFS has a short-term watershed agreement, which will expire July 31, 2005. It has been a challenge moving from one organization to another, but an agreement has been struck and we are now ready to move forward into the unknown. Ken Wilson is still the Stock Management Coordinator, albeit in a reduced capacity, Pete Nicklin is still the Assistant Stock Management Coordinator, in an even more reduced role, Mike Staley maintains his role, completely as the Fraser Panel Technical Liaison, and I maintain my role as the part-time, Executive Director. The NTA will have a part-time communications person who will be responsible for updating the web site, distributing the watershed talk, and getting meeting notices out to the communities on the Fraser. Essentially, FRAFS will function in almost the same manner as it did before the move.

Participants need to understand that FRAFS may have weathered the initial storm, but it is still far from calm water, and it is still not clear as to what will happen after July 31, 2005. There are a number of important issues for immediate consideration. Firstly, how do First Nations want to proceed with obtaining resources for FRAFS? Options include a short-term AAROM capacity agreement to get through until March 31, 2006, or FRAFS could maintain an AFS quarterly agreement approach, much like we have been doing for the past two years, or, and this is a longer term option, wait until a multi-year AAROM agreement can be developed and signed off, which will certainly take more than a few months by the time First Nations have agreed and signed the agreement; this would mean the operations would not function until the agreement is signed off. There are pros and cons to consider no matter which option.

Secondly, what functions/deliverables do First Nations want to consider under any type of agreement? With the summer in full swing, and the fishing season about to start, how much work can be realistically done between now and October? Some of the contractors have already secured work elsewhere which limits the biological function to a certain degree.

Thirdly, what kind of relationship do Fraser First Nations want to have with the DFO? Current thinking from DFO is that the past year has not been a good one, in terms of relationship building. There have not been any gains in our coordination and collaboration since the Bob Brown report back in 2002, in fact DFO feels as though information used for planning is divergent, and strongly feels that a way must be found to converge so that joint planning can occur. The question is what kind of process, and subsequent structures do First Nations want in order to take advantage of the current situation i.e. devolution of DFO in stock assessment and habitat monitoring?

The capacity gap is still a real issue and needs to be addressed, whether or not this issue is looked at through an overall watershed lens or at the local level, needs to be addressed. The implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy will pose both opportunities and challenges; and without some real coordination opportunities will certainly be missed. Watershed approaches to these and other issues are essential, but to what degree?

All First Nations need to be thinking about these issues and bring them to the next meeting being organized in Merritt, July 26, 2005, time, place, and agenda TBA.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns regarding these or any other matters at your convenience.

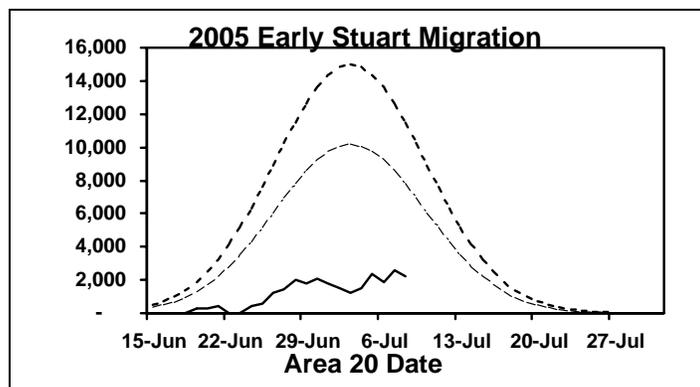
For more information contact **Marcel Shepert** at mars_shepert@shaw.ca or by phone at (250) 964-0337.

TECHNICAL UPDATE

By **Pete Nicklin**, *FRAFS Assistant Stock Management Coordinator*

The Fraser Panel adopted a downgraded run size of 35,000 for the Early Stuart sockeye on July 12th. The run size downgrade was the result of sustained weakness in the Area 20 and Area 12 test fisheries for this run. The Difference Between Estimates for what is expected to make it to the spawning grounds based on the Mission echo-sounder estimate is -34%. That means that at an estimated run size of 33,000 (35,000 minus the 2,000 fish test fishery), approximately 22,000 spawners will be estimated at the spawning grounds. At these abundances, there is no fishing on the Early Stuarts.

The following graph shows the Early Stuart daily abundance estimate at Area 20.



The Early Summer run is not showing as strongly as would be expected based on the 50% P forecast and on normal run timing. According to the Pacific Salmon Commission, an updated run size estimate should be available in late July.

According to the Minister of Fisheries announcement last week, the Late Summer run exploitation rate will be capped at 15%, with the Cultus exploitation held at 10-12%, which is what was planned in the draft Integrated Fisheries Management Plan.

The next Panel meeting is scheduled for July 19th, and the major decision date for commercial fisheries is July 22nd.

For more information contact **Pete Nicklin** at indiseant@shaw.ca or by phone at (250) 392-5888.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

IEC Teleconference Call: July 19, 2005 – 1PM

**In-season Information Teleconference Call:
July 21, 2005 – 4PM.**

Toll free dial in number 1-877-385-4099.

Lower Mainland residents call: 604-899-2339.

Passcode (including the # key) 3196930#

IEC Meeting: Merritt, BC – July 25th

Tier 1 Meeting: Merritt, BC – July 26th