

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE

By , Executive Director, FRAFS

The Executive Committee of FRAFS met in Merritt, BC on October 12, 2005. The meeting agenda focused on the: FRAFS/NTA watershed agreement highlights, Work planning, FRAFS purpose, Executive assistant position, Role of the Executive Committee, Communication system and design, Post Season review process, and Joint Technical Committee calendar and scheduling for next year.

FRAFS is now situated at the Nicola Tribal Council and most of the bugs have been ironed out; so the business begins. The EC has put together an ambitious work plan, with lots of interesting items, addressing a wide spectrum from science, education and out-reach, to fisheries management and co-management processes. As it turns out, coming up with a work plan is not a difficult thing to do, what is difficult is figuring out how to maximize the benefits of limited resources while achieving some real and tangible results.

The EC was unanimous; they agreed that the 2005-6 work plan needed to have a real focus, so a couple of key result areas were identified. For example: the Joint Technical Committee is in need of attention, and as such, has been identified as a key result area.

The Joint Technical Committee is contentious and could present a prickly situation, owing to the bi-lateral nature of the table. However, while the political landscape continues to shift, and the legal sparring continues, fish wait for no man or woman. Good management based on the best available science and TEK must forge ahead, and a good starting point is the Joint Technical Committee. Figuring out the mechanics will present challenges, but the EC understand the importance of sound science, effective planning and collaboration to achieve certainty and stability.

Fisheries management has become an increasingly complicated process with many, some might say "too many" players involved with overlapping mandates and competing objectives. The EC has identified the need for better collaborations with organizations like BCAFC, and newly emerging Aboriginal Aquatic Resources and Oceans Management (AAROM) bodies as an important area of work. Interestingly enough, after attending the BCAFC post-season review and discussing the BCAFC AAROM agreement this need is identified by the BCAFC as well. The FRAFS will be focusing time and resources on developing a better relationship with BCAFC to reduce

redundancy, and competition, which will lead to more effective use of resources overall.

The importance of the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP) implementation is a natural fit for FRAFS to engage in this year as well. The DFO has scheduled a number of meetings in the regions to discuss the next steps for implementing the WSP. Process issues will likely dominate the initial stages of implementation, while the technicians focus on conservation units and status of stocks.

Two other key result areas are: FRAFS/AAROM – proposal drafting sub committee, and the Fraser River Economic Fisheries Facilitation and Coordination Initiative.

A decision was made by the EC last year to establish an AAROM sub-committee to begin the task of drafting a new, multi-year AAROM proposal. There is now a work plan in place to bring members from the lower, mid, and upper Fraser River regions. Members were chosen based on prior experience, namely having written regional AAROM proposals. This has potential to produce some favourable results particularly if the inter-tribal framework starts to gather some momentum.

The Economic Facilitation and Coordination Initiative has been partially completed. Those First Nations with an interest in developing economic opportunities, particularly for terminal/inland fisheries have worked in cooperation to explore commercial alternatives. Given the emerging conservation climate, and the interest in both economic opportunities and sustainable development, FRAFS can facilitate some of the developmental work.

Other issues covered at the meeting included the Pacific Scientific Advice Review Committee (PSARC) process, Fraser Panel, Integrated salmon Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC), terminal fisheries policy development, completion of Terms of Reference for the EC and the FRAFS (including definition of consensus and Quorums), consultation, IFMP scheduling, website development, and legal options and opinions.

The PSARC process has been a bit of an enigma to First Nations and there can be no doubt that FN need to understand the process and build the capacity to fully participate. The EC has requested that Ken Wilson work with Al Cass, DFO to, firstly raise awareness, and secondly to begin identifying issues and provide Fraser FN with recommendations on how to become more meaningful participants. This could also be something the Joint Technical Committee works on.

The Fraser Panel process needs some attention, as such the EC has asked that I send a letter to Paul Ryall (Lead, Salmon Team DFO) requesting that he and the department provide me with some written communications as to the expectations of the department and also the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the technical committee, and panel members. It has been recognized for some time that there needs to be more FN participation and coordination, in order for the process to be more effective.

The IHPC will be having its second meeting and presumably will require clarification and attention. The EC felt that most of the responsibility for the IHPC would most likely fall to the regional AAROM bodies. This will be an important topic for the regional AAROM's, FRAFS, BCAFC, and local fisheries commissions to sort out over the next year.

Finally the TOR for the FRAFS and the EC will be on the agenda at the next Tier 1 meeting to be held in December.

For more information contact at (250) 964-0337 or by email at mars_shepert@shaw.ca.