

FRAFS Update - On July 26, 2005 a meeting was held in Merritt to decide whether or not the FRAFS organization should continue, if so in what form and with what resources? After an intense discussion the decision was made to move forward. First Nations agreed to pursue an AAROM agreement to continue operations of the FRAFS. The agreement has been finalized. I would like to thank all those in attendance at that meeting, and to all those First Nations who believe in this process, for better or for worse. Thanks also to regional DFO staff for their commitment and effort to bring this agreement to a speedy and positive conclusion.

FRAFS, AAROM Highlights - The new FRAFS, AAROM agreement is for one year, expiring, August 31, 2006. The agreement is to maintain the operations of the FRAFS albeit with some key deliverables and proposed outcomes. Some of the key highlights are as follows:

1. The FRAFS must refine its operations and prepare for a long-term collaborative management agreement under AAROM. This will allow the former AFS resources to be used for expanding the roles of other Fraser First Nations that have not had an opportunity to participate in fisheries management either locally or at the watershed level. This is a positive development and may bare fruit in the future toward building a First Nations watershed process.

2. FRAFS will begin implementing activities associated with the development of the tier 1 process, stemming from the three tier 1 meetings held last year in Merritt, Cache Creek, and Kamloops. The key long-term objective is to develop a strong and united tier 1 (inter-tribal treaty) process to:

- Protect Aboriginal Rights, protection and conservation of the resource
- Information sharing
- Promoting a deeper understanding of between Fraser First Nations, to speak with one voice
- Build trust
- Design structures for negotiations with governments
- Create structures that are stable, flexible, adaptable, transparent, and accountable

- Increase capacity
- Design better integrated structures for dealing with DFO
- Develop economic opportunities within the fisheries resource
- Incorporate TEK into the current management structure.

3. In the short-term FRAFS must:

- Develop and refine its Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Executive Committee (no longer Interim)
- Provide FRAFS with technical assistance
- Continue meeting bi-monthly
- Determine how AAROM structures will interact with FRAFS
- Collaborate with the BCAFC to minimize competition and redundancy
- Capacity development
- Strengthen the technical relationship with DFO to achieve common objectives
- Policy development
- Develop better consultation protocols

Inherent within all aspects of the intended focus of the FRAFS and this proposal, is that all activities are related to securing support from a majority of Fraser First Nations, while attempting to build a strong and united Fraser River Inter-tribal treaty process.

So what does all of this mean for day-to-day functions of the secretariat? On paper it looks like a pretty impressive list of activities and developments. In summary the FRAFS will maintain the services of three independent biologists, working on a part-time basis. The work of the Executive Director will also continue, on a part-time basis, and an Executive Assistant will also be hired to coordinate meetings and keep record of all interactions. A number of specialized consultants will be brought on for specific tasks like facilitation of meetings, liaising between industry and First Nations to begin exploring economic opportunities for all Fraser First Nations up and down the river, and some legal advice when necessary.

The work is still enormous in scope and I would be the first to admit the complexity, but I am optimistic that FRAFS can and will achieve these goals in the interest of all First Nations.

Marcel Shephert

Proposed new structure. Fig. 1

