

2010 Visions Workshop: Bridging Gaps and Building Trust

The Visions Workshop is an annual event sponsored by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat that brings together First Nation representatives and Fisheries and Oceans Canada personnel from throughout the Fraser Watershed and beyond. The Visions Workshops provide opportunities for participants to present perspectives on fisheries projects, discuss fisheries issues, and gather current information on programs, funding and prospective initiatives.

The 2010 Visions Workshop occurred over a two-day period on October 13th and 14th at Seabird Island, Agassiz, British Columbia. The workshop's theme was *Fisheries Data: Bridging Gaps and Building Trust*, a purpose that intended to clarify the linkages between the collection of fisheries data and the formulation of fisheries policy. Following this general theme and objective, selected representatives of differing perspectives made presentations on a variety of projects, programs and processes. To provide an overview of the challenges and opportunities associated with fisheries data it is important to highlight a number of the presentations that were given during the workshop.

The morning of day one began with several discussions, both under the theme of *Integrated Salmon Dialogue*. The opening presentation belonged to Wayne Saito, who, consequent to a fervent introduction by Glenn Sigurdson (Facilitator of Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum), provided an overview of the Monitoring and Compliance Panel. The presentation, which clarified both the purpose of a catch monitoring strategy and the drivers for a catch monitoring strategy, described the next steps for the Monitoring and Compliance Panel in the context of the *Charting Our Course* report. In the short term, a multi-sector engagement strategy will be facilitated to solicit constructive feedback on the *Charting Our Course* report in the interests of promoting best practices and incentives for improving monitoring and compliance. Moving forward on this theme, Colin Masson, the current Manager of the Enhanced Accountability element of the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, discussed emerging regional strategies to improve fisheries monitoring. This included an overview of the

strategic monitoring framework as well as collaborative harvester strategies. In summary, Colin Masson indicated that the Strategic Monitoring Framework is able to facilitate a consistent approach for improvements in all harvest sectors; that Fisheries and Oceans Canada will continue to improve the information management framework and internal accountability mechanisms; and pending consultations on common criteria, develop fundamental processes and respond to associated policy issues.

After a morning break, the topic of discussion shifted to the role of biological sampling, specifically, coded wire tags, for Chinook and coho management decisions. The presentation, shared by Doug Herriot, Kathy Fraser and Mike Staley, provided background information on coded wire tag programs as well as the utility of such programs in management decisions. For instance, according to an expert panel review in 2005, the "coded wire tag program must be relied upon as the primary fishery and stock assessment tool for at least the next five to ten years. No alternative technology currently exists that is capable of providing the data necessary for implementation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty." The tags maintain a considerable capacity to identify when and where healthy and weak stocks emerge and therefore assist in the identification of fishing opportunities. However, as articulated by Michael Staley, some challenges for the program prevail, particularly, the reluctance of First Nations to participate in coded wire tag sampling as a result of common concerns that the data will negate the interests of First Nations. The comprehensive presentation illustrated the challenges and opportunities from both the perspective of First Nation participation and Fisheries and Oceans Canada ability to implement the program.

As the workshop moved into the afternoon sessions, a number of presentations began to describe evident linkages between data and management decisions. Mark Duiven, the Deputy Commissioner for the Skeena Fisheries Commission, presented *Developing Relationships and Collecting Data: Practical Applications*. The discussion described the scientific method as a dominant paradigm, a model that can be utilized by First Nations to protect the right to the management of the resource. However, the utility of scientific data requires effective relations between monitors and fishers, monitors and program managers,

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aboriginal program managers and area Fisheries and Oceans Canada program managers, and area program managers and area fisheries managers. On a similar subject, Colin Masson presented *Linking Fisheries Data to Data Management Objectives*. The presentation asserted that the collection of accurate information is essential to an effective fisheries management plan, but integration and co-management is contingent on shared confidence in fisheries management regimes. Ultimately, the application of the scientific method represents one aspect of fisheries data, the other being the relationships among stakeholders that collectively validate the data.

The final session of the day, under the theme of *Test Fisheries*, included presentations by Herman Enzenhofer, Brian Riddell and Michael Staley. Herman Enzenhofer, the Hyrdo Acoustic Chief at the Cultus Lake Lab (Qualark Creek Site), provided a comprehensive overview of some of the programs and technology employed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada for stock assessment. For example, the use of dual-frequency identification sonar (DIDSON) was both discussed and displayed. In summary, investing in infrastructure (such as the DIDSON) simplifies site operations; the manual count processing is sufficient for high data volumes; and the DIDSON technology is preferred over split-beam due to ease of operation and visual interpretation of fish behaviour. On a less technical level, Brian Riddell, the Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Salmon Foundation, discussed the *Count on Salmon Project* conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Pacific Salmon Commission and the Pacific Salmon Foundation. Brian described the future values of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the context of different test fisheries projects. The presentation also considered some of the successes, including the use of fish wheels in the determination of lower river species estimates and the use of radio tagging for catch and tributary distribution in the lower river. However, Brian also indicated that a number of current and future challenges have emerged, including the management and funding of such projects, the cost-effectiveness of such projects, and the ongoing participation and acceptance of responsibilities. The discussions of test fisheries exemplified some interesting perspectives on the future of stock assessment, a cautiously optimistic conclusion to the first day of Visions.

The morning session of the second day of the workshop concentrated on the involvement and engagement of First Nations in stock assessment and catch monitoring programs. Lita Gomez, a resource biologist for Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the Interior of British Columbia, provided an overview of the purpose and process of catch monitoring and the different First Nations communities currently involved in such programs. In summary, the strength of catch monitoring is contingent on effective relationships, that is, active collaboration between the Department and First Nations. To appropriately illustrate stock assessment and catch monitoring from a First Nations perspective, Tony Malloway and Ron Williams from the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Society provided an in-season example of catch monitoring activities. The presentation affirmed the commitment and rigour involved with such programs, as catch monitors are trained to accurately collect and report data from the licensed fishery openings. Undoubtedly, by maintaining accountability and accuracy, the monitoring program continues to be a vital instrument in the preservation of the fish stocks in the Fraser River. The final presentation of the session expanded on First Nation stock assessment and catch monitoring programs by discussing these activities in the context of data as a management tool. Pat Matthew, the Fisheries Management Coordinator of the Secwepemc Fisheries Commission, asserted that SFC data management is essential to gauge the health of stocks for conservation and harvest planning, to ensure biological and genetic diversity, and to participate in policy development. Through an evaluation of stock assessment practices for both sockeye and Chinook, it becomes evident that wild salmon policy objectives are difficult to meet as the Department has developed regulations based on the management of large aggregates. In response to such challenges, Pat recommended that fish be managed as a watershed program to ensure wild salmon policy escapement objectives and food, social and ceremonial requirements are attained.

Following a morning break, the workshops only panel discussion occurred, with representatives from both First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The panel members included Christina Ciesielski, Mark Duiven and Barry Huber. Christina Ciesielski, Fisheries Program Manager for the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, initiated the discussion with a brief overview of Carrier

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Sekani initiatives. Although Carrier Sekani conducts most projects in conjunction with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Christina noted, in respect to fisheries data, that the Department often considered data collected by Carrier Sekani to be inadequate and unreliable. Christina speculated what the next steps should be if First Nations are to assume responsibility for stock assessment. To follow up on this discussion, Mark Duiven reflected on this predicament, offering insight into past programs and policies. For example, as a result of the Aboriginal Procurement Strategy instated during the late nineteen-eighties, a technical committee was created with the purpose of establishing a consensus regarding the meaning of scientific data and the elimination of redundancy. Certainly, as reiterated by Mark, this question is central in a number of issues confronting First Nations fisheries. To provide an alternative perspective, Barry Huber, Aboriginal Affairs Advisor for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, discussed the opportunities for First Nation engagement in stock assessment and the Department's role in the provision of such programs. As stated by Barry, the Department will provide financial resources for assessment processes, but First Nations must maintain a standard of operational and technical capacity for the collection, dissemination and analysis of data. From the Department's perspective, the integrity of long-term data sets must be maintained regardless of capacity changes among First Nation communities, a policy that results in intentional repetition to ensure confidence in the collected data. The prevailing issue thus becomes a matter of capacity building. According to Mark Duiven, a standardization of the methodology used in fieldwork must occur. For instance, the Skeena Fisheries Commission organizes a pre-season field school (with First Nations and Department participation) to ensure a commonality of practice between the two parties. Furthermore, the Skeena Fisheries Commission coordinates a 360 degree evaluation in community high schools to gauge interest in fisheries careers. Therefore, educational opportunities are essential components of capacity building. It is important to note that these educational opportunities are not unrealistic; as such programs could be funded by the Department as well as the Aboriginal Skills Employment Program. Despite the optimistic assessment of capacity building, other important issues remain. For example, the Department may soon have to consider amendments to the AFS

agreements, the possibility of an integrated assessment process, the procurement and distribution of funds, and the perpetual problem surrounding the retention of seasonal employees. The panel discussion exemplified the challenges associated with First Nations assuming responsibility for stock assessment, but also provided a number of tangible recommendations and prospective programs to increase the organizational and operational capacity of First Nations communities interested in such processes.

Until the afternoon of day two, one issue that had been left untouched was the issue of data management, a subject of inquiry for Megan Moody in a presentation about the Central Coast Data Management Advisor Pilot. Megan provided an overview of the project in the Central Coast, discussing issues related to support staff, high speed Internet and online meetings, training, catch calendars, fisheries committees and the necessity of effective communication. Ultimately, the implementation of database software was not without a distinct set of challenges within different communities, but the database provides the means to enhanced communication and organization. The pilot project is intended to provide direction, as well as recommendations, on how to make the position (data management advisor) successful in regions other than the Central Coast.

The final presentation of the workshop, presented by Arlene Tompkins of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, provided a stock assessment framework update. The presentation was in the context of wild salmon policy, the changing context for assessment and monitoring, and the renewal of internal and external partner engagement, stock assessment priorities and the development of prioritization process for project delivery. The presentation illustrated how stock assessment data is used, how annual project funding is determined, and how prioritization occurs. The result of such procedures is a set of distinct challenges, such as the prioritization of monitoring and assessment requirements and the cancellation of monitoring and escapement programs throughout British Columbia. Despite these operational challenges, the Department continues to evaluate new assessment models, the potential minimization of expenditures through an evaluation of cost efficiency, and the improvement of data management and accountability. The presentation depicted the complexity of managerial

and policy development processes, but clarified how some decisions are made.

Undoubtedly, consensus on an unambiguous vision of fisheries management does not exist among First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, but several interesting patterns continually appear. For example, both First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada agree that reliable and consistent data is essential to fisheries management, but this must be a process founded on a collaborative partnership. To borrow a line from one presentation, “effective science requires effective relationships.” Such a partnership also requires a commitment to capacity building. As many of the presentations indicated, the collection of adequate fisheries data demands rigour, a labour intensive and technically orientated activity. However, a cyclical process of inadequate reporting and mistrust prevails when the collaborative process deteriorates. There is no simple answer, but future discussions might consider some of the incentives and disincentives for First Nations to rigorously monitor, record and report fisheries data, for sometimes the data collected is the data used to disallow fishing practices. Regardless of the apparent paradoxes, an equitable partnership that concentrates on technical and educational capacity building might support the development of an increasingly comprehensive assessment tool that ensures adequate management in the context of budgets constraints and convoluted operational climates.

For further information about Visions, including the complete set of PowerPoint presentations, please see: www.frafs.ca/?q=node/32

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Below are some important meeting dates for scheduling considerations.

Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat Meetings:

- **November 22-23:** Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Forum: Catch Monitoring Workshop

- **December 14-15, 2010:** Roadmap Workshop: Co-Management Development (two days of Tier One), Lower Mainland
- **January 25-26, 2011:** Forum on Conservation & Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon (Richmond)
- **February 8-9, 2011:** Roadmap: Co-Management Development (two days Tier One & Tier Two) third & final planned for fiscal year (location to be determined)
- **February 22-23, 2011:** Forum on Conservation & Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon (Richmond)
- **March 29-30, 2011:** Forum on Conservation & Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon (Vancouver Island)
- **May 10-11, 2011:** Forum on Conservation & Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon (Kamloops)

Other Meetings:

- **October 26-27, 2010:** Tier One IMAWG (South Coast)
- **October 29, 2010:** Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Interim Coordinating Committee (ICC) Meeting (Abbotsford)
- **November 2-4, 2010:** First Nations Fisheries Council annual Assembly (Prince Rupert)
- **November 15, 2010:** Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Forum (Fort Langley)
- **November 17, 2010:** Fraser River Salmon Table and Monitoring and Compliance Panel's workshop (location to be determined)
- **November 22-23, 2010:** Peacemaker Conflict Resolution training (location to be determined)
- **November 30-Dec 1, 2010:** ITO Assembly (location to be determined)
- **December 1-3, 2010:** First Nations Summit Meeting
- **December 6, 2010:** Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Forum (location to be determined)
- **December 9-10, 2010:** Fraser Panel
- **January 10-14, 2011:** PST

For further information about important meetings please see www.frafs.ca. The Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat now has a calendar that will provide up-to-date meeting information for Fraser River processes.

First Nations Fisheries Council fall Assembly (November 2nd – 4th in Prince Rupert)

The annual First Nations Fisheries Council Assembly is only a week away, so those interested should consider registration, accommodations and travel arrangements. The theme of the 2010 Assembly is “Co-Management: Developing a Shared Vision for the Future”, and will be held at the Nisga’a Hall in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, from November 2nd to 4th. A reminder that the first day of the Assembly will be Tier One meetings (First Nations Only) while the second and third day will be Tier Two meetings.

Registration for the conference is required, so please complete the registration form online at <http://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/index.php/the-fn-fisheries-council/meetings/2010-fall-assembly>.

An Assembly agenda that provides a general overview of some of the themes and presentations at the conference is available. There will be catering service provided throughout the Assembly, including a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon refresher. Also, a meet and greet will be held at Chances Casino on Wednesday (November 3rd) evening, with fresh appetizers and a dance performance by the Sugyigyet Dancers from Metlakatla First Nation. A special reminder, that if you have food allergies please contact us so we can make the appropriate arrangements.

As travel to Prince Rupert can be limited, please consider travel options such as flight or ferry. For some links to various service providers see our website at <http://bit.ly/daA2fy>. Included on this page is the contact information and rates for accommodations in Prince Rupert.

Finally, a travel subsidy is available for qualifying applicants. The subsidy will provide a reimbursement for travel costs subsequent to the fall Assembly. Completion of the travel subsidy application form is required, so please include information such as travel arrangements,

summary of travel costs, and other necessary information detailed on the application form. Also, please note that only one representative from each First Nation will qualify for the travel subsidy.

For further details about the conference please see our website, or simply contact the Communications Coordinator (matthew@fnfisheriescouncil.ca).