

Hi there everyone,

First, please allow me to apologize for any miscommunication or interruption in FRAFS services that you may have noticed over the last several weeks. The NTA had a major computer system crash that disrupted operations for a while, but I am pleased to announce that the problem finally seems to be fixed. After a brief hiatus, we're up and running once again. Unfortunately the crash has also halted FRAFS website operations, which is taking a little longer to fix – but we hope to resume our updating schedule soon, so please stay tuned.

FRAFS is back just in time to prepare for the Visions 2008 Fisheries Conference, to be held April 8, 9 and 10 at the Chehalis Healing House. The organizing committee has developed a full agenda of presentations relating to this year's theme: "Building Governance: Lands, Laws and Treaties". Back by popular demand is Visions Hockey in Chilliwack on Tuesday April 8th at 9:45pm, and we'll also be holding the annual banquet on Wednesday April 9th at 6:30pm – expect delicious food and great musical entertainment (free of charge for workshop attendees). Thank you to those of you who pre-registered, but if you forgot, don't worry – a registration table will be set up from 8:30-9:30am on Tuesday, April 8.

Happy Friday, hope to see you all at Visions.

Aimee Arsenault

FRAFS Communications Coordinator

WANTED: MEETING VENUES

FRAFS is looking for bands, tribal councils and First Nations organizations that can serve as meeting venues for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. If your organization has rentable meeting space and catering services that could be made available to FRAFS, we would love to host a future meeting in your territory!

**Interested parties please contact
Aimee Arsenault,
FRAFS Communications Coordinator**

Marine/Fraser Watershed-wide Meeting April 2 and 3 Richmond, BC

By Neil Todd

Approximately 50 people from First Nations throughout the Fraser Watershed and Vancouver Island came together for the second "regional workshop" to discuss the potential management of Chinook and sockeye fisheries for this year.

This meeting was the second of the series, with the first one being held in Surrey back in late February. Since that meeting, a series of four more "sub-regional" First Nations meetings took place in Prince George, Kamloops, Langley, and Nanaimo.

April 2 was designated as a "Tier 1", or First Nations only, meeting. As expected, the issues and conversations were wide ranging. Many heartfelt expressions of frustration, disappointment, and resentment about the state of the fisheries resource and the effects on communities were heard. But through it all there was also humour, laughter, and an unprecedented feeling of solidarity among all present. The day ended with the designation of some leaders to spend some extra time at the end of the day to put together a document that summed up the issues and outlooks expressed during the day.

On April 3 the first two hours were set aside for First Nations only. The First Nations document prepared late the day before was presented, reviewed, amended, and finalized by the full assembly. The agenda for April 3 as proposed by DFO was basically set aside by agreement. When DFO joined the meeting, the document was presented and explained. Dialogue, questions, and answers followed. Later in the day the outlook for sockeye returns to the Fraser was presented by DFO which again generated questions, answers, and comments.

Throughout the meeting, the level of respect remained high. An outcome from the meeting was the formation of an interim First Nations' political working group tasked with keeping the dialogue and communications on sockeye fishing plans alive among First Nations. This outcome did not meet DFO's hopes or expectations – but grappling with the uncertainties of sockeye management in 2008, within the context of issues already generated around some Chinook management decisions, could not help but prevent the clear-cut result that DFO was hoping for.

On the next page is the document produced by the First Nations and presented to DFO on April 3.

Opening Comments:

The group has been meeting since January 2008 originally because DFO made a request that the First Nations discuss the issues that come up around FSC fish when the abundance of fish is low.

One of the key issues which DFO brought to this group is the problems around Chinook and sockeye management during a year of low abundance.

DFO's response on chinook management to date has not been satisfactory to those who hold rights to fisheries and is considered by many as disrespectful.

These ACTION POINTS have been developed by this Interim Working Group on Fraser Fisheries which will be continuing to work on these issues.

Preamble: The Interim Working Group on Fraser Fisheries has agreed on the following Basic Statements:

- Made a declaration together of Unity for Aboriginal and Treaty title and Rights, from the approach to the headwaters
- Working together on conservation, restoration and recovery through whole area. (including coastal and Fraser)
- Planning of First Nations access to Fraser Fish
- Will work together on resource management plans, including First Nations economies, with each other - FN to FN plans only: We already have our own sharing and access arrangements, affirmed by both Canadian and customary law; these are an inter-tribal responsibilities.
- First Nations have priority over all other fisheries. DFO is not applying the priority affirmed by the SCC. There cannot be any fisheries open which could compromise the stocks or our fishing rights.
- DFO issues communal licences with arbitrary numbers; these do not meet needs.
- These discussions are without prejudice to other processes underway

Actions from these Meetings:

1. First Nations' Working Group on Fraser Fisheries: (WGFF)

Formation of Working Group on Fraser Fisheries (WGFF) which will be engaged in the political and practical process for management: in-season, pre-season and post season – Requires adequate administrative support and funding.

2. Performance Measure Required:

FN will harvest to their needs: Need is Not a Number. It includes the health wellbeing and preservation of our culture. Nevertheless DFO is failing to fulfill their imposed numbers and must be held accountable.

At a minimum DFO should be accountable for delivering the FSC targets they impose. (Has DFO been able to accomplish what they said they would do?).

2.a Communal licensing regulations should be reformed.

3. Windows of Opportunity:

First Nations are here to discuss windows of opportunity, not dividing up the fish or other resources.

4. Discussion Paper on Case Law on First Nations Fisheries: Comparison

Develop a 'Discussion Paper' on case law and how well DFO policies follow the directions given by the Courts – to be used as the basis for future resource management.