

CONSULTATIONS FOR THE 2008 FISHING SEASON: AN UPDATE - By Neil Todd

Considerable effort has been underway for the last month to initiate discussions around the potential fisheries management issues that may arise in 2008.

Background

Late last fall the Secretariat and DFO began working to try to arrive at an arrangement that would:

- Provide information relevant to fisheries management potential issues in 2008;
- Provide venues for First Nations to discuss among themselves the potential issues they may be facing in 2008;
- Provide First Nations with sufficient information to assist them in their bi-lateral consultations with DFO in regard to the management of their fisheries in 2008.

Discussions/negotiations were completed regarding the amount of extra funding and subsequent FRAFS budget amendment needed to support this initiative.

Progress

In early January 2008 the following arrangements were agreed upon between the Secretariat and DFO for the remainder of this fiscal year:

- DFO to host a watershed-wide (including marine area approach tribes) meeting in early January to present information concerning Fraser River salmon stocks and the outlook for 2008;
- FRAFS to arrange for a series of “sub-regional” or “sub-watershed” workshops for First Nations in the following areas: upper Fraser; mid-Fraser/Thompson; lower Fraser; and Vancouver Island.
- It was agreed that the four “sub-regional” meetings may be followed by another series for more detailed follow-up discussion.
- DFO to host a watershed wide (including marine area approach tribes) meeting at the end of February, focusing on receiving First Nations’ views on chinook management in 2008.

Results to Date

Watershed Wide Meeting

A DFO-hosted watershed wide meeting was held in Abbotsford on January 10. Approximately 100 people, including DFO staff, participated. First Nations attendees came from the headwaters of the Fraser to the approach tribes on northern Vancouver Island, and points in between. The Department provided detailed presentations of run size forecasts for Fraser sockeye in 2008, salmon stock status outlooks for 2008, and factors influencing

forecasts for sockeye and early timed chinook stocks.

Arrangements are now being made for the second watershed wide meeting to be hosted by DFO. This meeting will be held on February 25 (afternoon, Tier 1 only) and 26 (full day, DFO and First Nations) in Surrey.

Sub-regional Meetings

Four sub-regional meetings have been held to date: Prince George, Kamloops, Abbotsford, and Nanaimo. The general format has been to have DFO staff attend these meetings for the first part of the day to provide a consistent message with regard to the stock status and outlook for the 2008 Fraser salmon stocks, particularly spring chinook and sockeye. When the DFO staff have finished their presentations they have left the meeting. It has been made very clear at each of the meetings that these meetings do not replace or diminish the need for DFO to consult with all First Nations – including those in attendance – on a bi-lateral basis. FRAFS technical support biologists have assisted with the subsequent First Nations-only discussions for the rest of the day, providing additional information as necessary.

In all four sub-regional cases, the First Nations attendees have stated they would like to hold a follow-up meeting to further consider and discuss implications for their fisheries management plans in 2008. These meetings would be “Tier 1” in nature, i.e. DFO presence would not be required. These meetings are currently scheduled for March 5 (Prince George) and the week of March 10 (mid Fraser/Thompson, lower Fraser, and Vancouver Island).

UPCOMING MEETINGS

DFO hosted Watershed-wide Management Discussions
Feb 25 (pm) & Feb 26
Sheraton Guildford Hotel, Surrey

Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Committee
Feb 18, Ramada Plaza, Abbotsford

Management in 2008 follow-up round of First Nations only discussions: March 5 in Prince George; week of March 10, mid Fraser, lower Fraser, and Vanc. Island

Third Inter-Tribal Fisheries Treaty Meeting
March 27 & 28, Friendship Centre, Prince George

See www.frafs.ca for detailed meeting notices