

Fraser First Nations hold press conference to express Fraser Spring Chinook concerns

By Neil Todd, Nicola Tribal Association

VANCOUVER - On Tuesday May 4 a number of Fraser First Nation representatives gathered at the 51st St. Hall at Musqueam to hold a press conference where they could publicly express their concern about DFO management of Fraser spring chinook. Expressing a complete lack of confidence in the Department's management regime for these stocks, the First Nation people at the press conference called for the resignation of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Musqueam was chosen as the site for the press conference because it was a Musqueam Band member, Ron Sparrow, who pioneered the action that resulted in the Supreme Court of Canada declaration that the rights of First Nations in the fishery were second only to the needs of conservation of the fish themselves. The Fraser First Nations who assembled on May 4 cited the data in support of their case, made very clear the sacrifices they were making in placing a moratorium on their rights-based fisheries, and expressed dismay and anger that the Minister was continuing to endorse a privileged sport fishery on these stocks in violation of the Sparrow decision – and in violation of the conservation needs of the fish themselves.

Keynote speaker at the press conference was Grand Chief Ed John of the First Nations Summit. Representatives speaking at the press conference were Fred Fortier (Secwepemc First Nation), Tracy Sampson and Neil Todd (Nlaka'pamux First Nation), and Grand Chief Ken Malloway (Sto:lo). Attending in support were the Musqueam and Tsawwassen First Nations.

CBC Television and APTN television attended the press

conference and aired portions of it. Both the Globe and Mail and the Vancouver Sun, while not in attendance, subsequently carried forceful articles by their columnists in support of the demand by First Nations that DFO fulfil its obligations to the fish. As stated in Mark Hume's column (Globe and Mail, May 4 2010) "...John Morris, director of communications for the minister's office, said fishing openings are being allowed only in areas where Fraser chinook are unlikely to be caught." Despite the statement from the Minister's office, it is clear from DFO's own data that sport fishing is occurring in areas where Fraser chinook are likely to be caught.

Fraser First Nations have repeatedly called into question the adequacy of DFO's marine sport fishery monitoring program and the data generated by it, resulting in a complete lack of confidence in the department's management actions. Two things seem clear to First Nations: 1) the fisheries that DFO is continuing to allow likely do NOT have "low or no impact on these stocks"; and 2) the stocks in question are not able to withstand ANY sport fishing impacts, low or otherwise.

The Minister has not addressed the linked issue of sport fisheries enjoying harvests of fish while First Nations rights-based fisheries are closed to protect those same stocks.



Meeting Notices

FORUM ON CONSERVATION AND HARVEST PLANNING FOR FRASER SALMON

May 19-20, 2010

with a Technical Forum
Session on May 18, 2010

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AIRPORT HOTEL
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Group reservation is under
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FISHERIES MANAGEMENT "ROADMAP" WORKSHOP June 2-3, 2010 Location TBA

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