

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for fisheries representatives and their organizations

Progress towards AFS and AAROM Renewal – Pre-Cautious Optimism

By Brian Toth, Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance

With the AFS and AAROM programs' terms and conditions set to expire March 31, 2009, the DFO is preparing for their delivery, with some aspects of renewal, for the next fiscal and beyond. Included within this process will be attempts to update both;

1. the Terms and Conditions that control the delivery of Agreements under these programs, including financial delivery mechanisms and controls, and,
2. the programs' broad objectives and their reflection within Agreement Terms and Conditions, to achieve a better match with Canada's/DFO's mandate and objectives (as it relates to the impetus for each program).

The DFO's process of preparing for a renewal of the programs is paralleling an initiative by the Aboriginal Policy and Governance staff to create an "Integrated Program Approach" to Aboriginal Programming, and a response to Treasury Board advice to "simplify program design and delivery".

A meeting of senior DFO, Aboriginal Policy and Governance staff and representatives from Aboriginal groups across Canada occurred in Toronto this week – a first step in engaging AAROM and AFS Agreement holders in the program renewal process, including considering (within the context of the two points above) the key questions of:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How are we going to get there?

The meetings were generally very positive with a lot of valuable information exchanged. Among the most common concerns brought out in the breakout sessions included:

- Financial and administrative inefficiencies – the need to improve the timeliness of funding flow and reduce reporting burdens
- The culture of micromanagement that seems to have worsened – the need for trust and flexibility
- The inconsistency of DFO's approach – capacity issues within the department to deliver the programs

In general, most of the feedback stated that the programs' objectives were being achieved to some degree, but that much more could be accomplished if the issues identified were addressed.

It was also heard loud and clear that the funding levels of these programs, and in particular within AFS, need to increase substantially, and that at a minimum, multi-year agreements need to be indexed to inflation.

A presentation was provided on DFO's intentions to improve the efficiency and flexibility of Agreement funding arrangements, including:

- The ability to move \$ between projects
- The ability to carry \$ between fiscals (within multi-year

agreements)

- The potential to disburse \$ on the basis of cash flow
- Reduced reporting requirements
- The potential elimination of year-end hold backs

Obviously, these are some excellent ideas that will result in a reduction of time and effort spent managing agreements, with more effort spent doing actual work (see more information on the Transfer Payment Policy at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/gcr-esc/docs/2008/ragecp-rapsc-eng.asp>).

It was also pointed out to DFO, that while the administrative and program management issues are fundamental improvements that are required, the programs themselves are created as government responses to changes in the legal environment, and that Aboriginal groups have to ensure the programs' objectives adequately reflect and facilitate the necessary change. Providing the Aboriginal perspective(s) for the purposes of renewal is therefore fundamental – Pacific Region DFO staff at the meeting indicated that a Pacific Region-specific engagement process will be explored to gain the regional perspectives on the required aspects of program renewal.

Andrew Day (Uu-a-thluk Secretariat, Nuu-chah-nulth) captured some key points of discussion from the session that will be circulated via the Fisheries Council, and a much larger summary of the feedback captured at the meeting will be completed.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Brian (from Aimee and Pete) for getting this information together with such short notice.

Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

at the Comfort Inn, Kamloops BC

Room Reservations: 250-372-0987

1810 Rogers Way, Kamloops BC

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