

Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning

May 7-9, 2013

Lillooet BC

Forum Planning Committee: (Ken Malloway, Andrew Meshue, Tony Roberts Jr., Dean Allan, Adrian Wall, Ernie Victor)

The Forum Planning Committee developed the following objectives:

- To provide a response to previous letters sent to DFO on behalf of the Forum participants.
- To provide an overview of feedback to date on the 2013-14 South Coast Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP)
- To continue discussion on sockeye escapement options.
- To have discussion on Chinook fishing plans for FSC.
- To receive an update from the Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Working Group.
- First Nations only session.

STRUCTURE

The current structure of the meeting format is not working demonstrated by participant frustration on day 1. To be fair the frustration was shared by everyone, both parties reverted to a type of entrenchment and couldn't move forward. Presently, the Forum meetings follow a sequence, i.e. Much like the Fraser Panel process, the technical representatives from both DFO and FN meet (FWJTWG) prior to a bilateral session. The FWJTWG works through a technical agenda, the objectives are to work collaboratively and share technical information as it relates to salmon management. This part of the sequence is working well.

Afterward FN and DFO meet (Tier 2), DFO presents feedback from past correspondence and provides any new or updated information on the 2013 salmon fishery to the larger mixed plenary. At these sessions FN can seek to understand and clarify information the department is giving and provide feedback or concerns. Finally, FN break off and meet with each other (Tier 1) to try and develop common positions or recommendations on the salmon fishery, which they are obliged to share with the department in the hopes that their collective recommendations will be implemented.

The main issue with the current structure is that it starts with a DFO response to an earlier response, and then FN immediately begin their subsequent responses to that; this approach bogs down very quickly as demonstrated in Lillooet. The concerns raised are legitimate and

require time to process; however, often in the interest of time, or meeting consultation requirements, DFO responses can come across as positional or defensive, which only slows the process further. The spiraling downward only continues as FN bring up regional / local issues which compound the situation and can get backs up. Instead of reiterating a particular conclusion, point, or position on a given issue, particularly if the tension is ratcheting up, participants need to simply hear the concerns out, acknowledge it, and then move on. The facilitator can also begin identifying the issue as local or regional and request that the conversation take place at that level. Further, it would help to identify who exactly will be responsible for having these conversations from both sides, demonstrates both clarity and commitment.

During the Tier 1 discussions on day 2, First Nations Participants were clear that in the interest of moving the Forum process forward (no one wants to quit), the structure should be changed to better meet the objectives of both DFO and First Nations. No one wants to feel like their wasting their time. The process was not meant to be static and sequences have changed since the process began in 2008.

At this time FN propose that the FWJTWG continue to meet and work on the technical aspects, taking more time if needed, e.g. 1.5 or 2 days, prior to the Tier 1 or 2 processes. Many of the Fraser and Approach FN have technical representatives at the FWJTWG and the process has demonstrated a high level of functionality to both parties.

Instead of following up the FWJTWG meeting with a bilateral, FN recommend that 2 full days be set up for Tier 1. FN trust their technical representatives will act in their best interest and can easily act as a buffer for clarifications on technical matters. Tier 1 discussions would be allotted more time to develop clearer positions. DFO technical staff could field questions from FN technical representatives visa telephone or email. Finally, DFO would be invited back in for a half day session for any clarifications or to provide responses to any communiqué.

CONTENT

As noted in the meeting, the Chinook management measures response has taken up an inordinate amount of time at each of the Forum meetings since January. Understanding that the Southern BC Chinook Framework is underway, more time will be needed for Chinook discussions in the future. The response letter from DFO to FN tried to assure FN that that FN recommendations have been taken seriously and have lead to reduced exploitation overall; however, two recurring themes keep cropping up: Priority access as per the Sparrow case in relation to the recreational fishery, and the process of a understanding the proposed comprehensive Southern BC Chinook Strategic Plan. The perceived inability to do anything, or do the kind of analysis necessary, seems like stalling and heightens tension. DFO has done a good job supplying information to the best of their abilities, but still waiting for CWT data analysis because someone is off on another assignment sends FN mixed messages, especially given the sensitivity of the topic.

For sockeye there are a myriad of issues to deal with including the FRSSI, Principles and Guidelines, IFMP's, TAM rules etc...during these discussions many issues arise that are beyond the scope of the Forum, e.g. fish farms, or pine beetle, or habitat. DFO acknowledges these issues are important but FN need to understand that this is not the place to have those discussions and by merely mentioning them bogs the process down.

First Nations spent the entire allotted Tier 1 time discussing the management issues and made significant progress toward building a kind of consensus, at least of those participating. Progress was made on Early Stuart sockeye measures (more work needed), understanding and general agreement on potential measures for Early Summer sockeye, with the understanding that these outcomes are directly connected to Early Stuart management measures.

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about what impacts a pink fishery will have to sockeye, coho, and Chinook. Finally, FN understand how hard it is to reach consensus at the tier 1 level, on any issue, DFO understands this. The tier 1 session was clear that it wants to continue to meet face-to-face up to four times, but possible more, and continue building on current successes, which have evolved out of the Forum process. One of the leaders was quoted as saying “don't throw the baby out with the bath water” a clear endorsement for the process.

Next steps:

- Fraser FN continue to meet to work on sockeye recommendations and provide DFO with directions.
- The Forum planning committee plan to meet to begin planning the next steps.
- FN to draft letter to DFO.
- Meeting to be held sometime in new-year.