



WATERSHED TALK NEWSLETTER

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Chilko Partnership

Leonard English (Toosey) and **Gerald Williams** (Nemiah) are damned good field technicians,” **Richard E. Bailey** proudly states. “They’re fun to work with too.”

Richard leads the Chinook and Coho Stock Assessment Program, BC Interior at Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). For the past five years he’s worked with Tsilhqot’in National Government (TNG) on the Chinook Mark-Recapture program based on the Chilko River system. It’s part of Canada’s responsibilities under the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

“The department made the initial steps to work with us,” said **Paul Grinder (Fisheries Manager, TNG)**. And both sides believe that its worked very well.

Dream Site

“The Chilko system is everything we dream about when doing biology,” Richard said. “It’s remote, rugged, big, all the fish are there ... and the phone doesn’t go.” This lets them focus on the task at hand: examining if Chilko River Chinook can be used as an indicator stock.



Gerald Williams with a big Spring tagged on the Chilko R.

Richard explained the importance of indicator stocks: “They allow you to measure how much harvest pressure is being applied on a stock, and the larger management group it represents.”

On the Chilko, they use Mark-Recapture studies (coded wire tag) to estimate the number, by age and by sex, of Chinook that return to the spawning grounds. Combined with helicopter spawner counts, “we can reliably deliver very high quality estimates of Chinook salmon escapement,” said Richard. This data is then used in detailed studies on abundance and fishing patterns.

Today’s Paper

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Chilko Partnership

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Data Partnerships

Mark-Recapture studies is the preferred method for Chinook management from northern California to southeast Alaska. Many First Nations in the United States, such as the Northwest Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, partner in the delivery of indicator stock groups.

“There should be an indicator stock for each of the major management groups,” said Richard. “It’s a common set of data that everyone – First Nations, DFO, the commercial and recreational sectors - can argue from, or argue about.”

Future Funding?

The Chilko program was part of the Sentinel Stocks Program that ended in 2014. Currently, DFO staff are pursuing funding options to continue with the Chinook Mark-Recapture. Work continues to identify opportunities to address this priority in Fraser River Chinook Salmon assessment capacity.

“The Chilko Mark-Recapture generates high quality data via a strong, productive partnership between DFO and the Tsilhqot’in,” said **Gord Sterritt (Executive Director, Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance)**. “This is excellent value on the dollar and my hope is that funding will come through.”



*Leonard English (Toosey) and Gerald Williams (Nemiah)
Photo: Richard E. Bailey*

Many Fraser salmon spawn in the Chilko system.

For example, the Pacific Salmon Commission estimates that of 6.8 million sockeye returning to the Fraser this season, approximately 2.4 million are Chilko bound. These fish are part of the summer run management group.



FSMC: Preparing to Negotiate

The Annual Strategic Plan for the Fraser Salmon Management Council (FSMC) was approved at the Assembly held on February 25-26. “We’re ready,” said **Carl Edgar Jr (Ditidaht)** of the Main Table’s commitment to the work ahead. There are three key objectives to FSMC’s Annual Strategic Plan:

1. Community engagement



“More folks at the table,” is one thing that **Thomas Alexis (Tl’azt’en)** and the Main Table are working on. There are currently 52 Signatory First Nations to the FSMC.

Pat Matthew (Simpew) is the lead on FSMC community engagement. He’s recently visited the Stó:lō Tribal Council, Lower Nicola IB and the St’át’imc / Nlaka’pamux Tribal Council Joint Chiefs meeting.

“Join us,” is the message that Pat and the Main Table will be bringing to a community near you.

Pat receives a Sumas blanket from Chief Dalton Silver (Photo: LFFA)

2. Building governance structure

“We’re building the administrative structure and processes that will sustain the FSMC over the long term,” said **Neil Todd (FSMC Operations Manager)**. At the recent FSMC Assembly, Member Delegates were provided an overview of FSMC’s Finance and Communications policies developed since the start of the year.

The Main Table has also written an Observers Policy. First Nations who are interested in the FSMC, but who are not yet Member Delegates, will be able to attend the Assemblies. “We want people to see how we do business,” said **Darren Haskell (FSMC Chairperson)**. “But we’ll be asking people to confirm four weeks in advance and to send two people at most from their community. This way we can make arrangements to have enough food, and a big enough meeting room, at our Assemblies.”



Lower Fraser: Winners of the Inaugural FSMC Governance Prestige Award.



FSMC (continued)

3. Preparing to Negotiate

As expressed and committed to by both Parties in the Letter of Understanding, the FSMC and DFO will enter a negotiation process concerning the management of Fraser River salmon.

Over 2015/16 fiscal year, FSMC is taking steps to prepare for negotiations, including:

- coming to agreement with DFO on a *Framework to Guide Negotiations* (i.e. the “rules of the game”);
- retaining an experienced Lead Negotiator;
- developing a negotiation strategy;
- obtaining a Negotiation Mandate from FSMC Member First Nations; and
- coming to agreement with DFO on a negotiation schedule.

The first step is *The Framework to Guide Negotiations*: the rules for both DFO and First Nations to follow during negotiations. FSMC is currently working on a draft with Chad Rudiak and Sarah Murdoch from DFO. The goal is to have the Main Table approve the *Framework* and to have both DFO and FSMC sign off on it before next fishing season begins.

This is ambitious, but the FSMC is aiming to begin negotiations with DFO in February, 2016.



Tl'azt'en community members Darren Haskell (FSMC Chair) and Grand Chief Ed John (First Nations Summit) visit with Mary Charles (Musqueam).

“First Nations will have more strength, more say in Fraser salmon management decisions through the FSMC,” said Darren Haskell. This is the goal that inspires the Main Table as the FSMC prepares for negotiations with DFO.

The Fraser Salmon Management Council (FSMC) is the Tier 1 governance body by which First Nations will enter into negotiations with DFO. The goal: to secure a role for First Nations in management decision-making processes over Fraser salmon.



April 13-14 Fraser Salmon Forum



The April 13-14 Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning (Fraser salmon) will be held at the Executive Airport Hotel, 7311 Westminster Highway, Richmond.

Guest rooms

We have a discount rate of \$105/room (single or double; parking included) until Friday, April 3rd, 4 p.m. Please call toll free at 1-800-663-2878 and quote **“FRAFS.”**

Agenda to follow.