

# Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon

February 18 - 20 • Richmond •

Facilitators Feedback on the Process

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

The Forum Planning Committee developed an agenda based on three key areas with sub-objectives for each, they were as follows:

### **Technical Updates**

1. Fraser Sockeye Forecast and Escapement Objectives.
2. Management Adjustment Overview and Discussion.
3. Use of Fish Part 2 (tentative)

### **Operational Management**

1. Sockeye, management challenges
2. DFO response to January Forum feedback

## **FORUM**

The Forum was well attended with over 70 participants in attendance, the tone, pace, and conversations were focused, cordial, and generally productive. Participants were interested and engaged in the material; however, discussions still tend toward process and policy, i.e. Salmon Coordinating Committee updates, Catch Monitoring and Reporting, and Use of Fish Policy, taking up a more than a half day. Even when technical issues like, coho, chinook, and sockeye updates are on the agenda, participants spend considerable time trying to figure out process and policy issues leading to the material being presented about coho ER, chinook rebuilding, sockeye escapements, or management adjustments. Seems to me, that after the first engagement, the conversation should be more on substantive issues, or clarification of the technical aspects while simultaneously figuring out how to apply these options to any given FN fisheries proposal.

Spending time focusing on the issues like consultation and meaningful engagement, rather than developing options and clarifying how the technical data will affect any given FN fishery, seems counterproductive at this stage. There are two more forum sessions before the fishery commences, which is not a lot of time, First Nations need clarity and access to information to assist the process. Trying to figure out other process questions like, new IFMP formatting and scheduling, Salmon Coordinating Committee deliverables, IHPC, and Fraser Panel, plus other processes trying to develop sound fisheries, means First Nations need to be well on their way to defining and structuring their fishery in preparation for the more difficult discussions which lie ahead.

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### STRUCTURE

**Day 1 - Tier 1 discussions:** The entire morning of the first day was focused on other processes, i.e. Salmon Coordinating Committee (SCC), and Catch Monitoring and Reporting (CM&R); while these are important topics and certainly pertain to the Forum, they do take valuable time from the agenda to talk about options for section 35(1) fisheries. Having said that, it is important to realize that the SCC and the Forum process need to begin a conversation about potential roles and responsibilities, and how they will eventually merge. The CM&R was also important but may have been better placed on a FNFC agenda since the implications are BC wide and may receive more traction at that level.

The afternoon was dominated by Coho discussions and the FN letter and subsequent response by the department of fisheries. The technical aspects were somewhat hindered since DFO had committed to a full discussion on Interior Fraser Coho but didn't provide all of the information to the FN technical folks in time for the deliberations. Not having the information on hand lead to discussions that were less technical and more process orientated, which tends to slow things down, in terms of development of sharing options. If DFO is seeking input from FN than information has to be provided in a time sensitive manner allowing FN to study and prepare.

Due to the concerns about potentially changing the coho exploitation rate, FN spent more time on this topic than was allocated on the agenda. Not enough time was spent talking about the 2014 forecast for sockeye. The discussions on sockeye and chinook will need more time on future agendas.

**Day 2 – Tier 2:** The discussion were more substantive, DFO prepared a response to the Forum letter from January, and discussions were frank and collaborative in tone; however, due to DFO not being able to provide some important Coho information in a time for discussions, meant more time talking about open and transparent, or process legitimacy, instead of the clarifications and discussions required to deal with potential changes to Coho exploitations rates. Generally though comments were constructive and demonstrated a solution orientated approach.

Another distraction and ultimate process issue was the CSAS process. First Nations were concerned about the state of the CSAS process in relation to the Coho technical paper presented back in November. First Nations were not part of the paper in anyway other than being invited to comment after it was already written. Moving forward First nations were clear that they would like to be consulted about any CSAS papers from the outset and that they want input into setting objectives, and where possible, to provide direct input into its contents. Anything less than that will not be seen as progressing.

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Fraser sockeye forecasts, and management adjustment, discussions went well especially now since most FN understand these annual issues. Many First Nations are already starting to formulate plans and demonstrated this by voicing their potential positions based on the use of the data being presented and how they may use these data to present their fisheries at future forum meetings.

DFO has made it clear that the application of the Management Adjustment, for planning and application purposes, will change in 2014. This is not in and of itself. A bad thing,, but definitely adds to the complexity and can sometimes force the discussion to process rather than application. Finally, the Fraser River Sockeye Spawning Initiative (FRSSI) seems to be back on the table, this was not clearly communicated to First Nations since it appears to have gone from a discussion on, Principles and Guidelines, to a full FRSSI consultation, which translates into more time talking about process. This tends to take away from more substantive discussions.

**Day 3 - Tier 2:** The conversation on day 3 was similar in tone and substance as day 2. The only exception was the presentation on Use of Fish Policy. The potential to affect FN section 35(1) fishery is real in the minds of FN participants and the presentation did not seem to deliver any comfort or provide the type of information FN need in order to prepare for more substantive bilateral discussions.

### **Next steps:**

- Fraser FN and DFO to spend more time on sockeye and chinook recommendations and provide DFO with directions.
- The Forum planning committee plan to meet to begin planning the next steps and to provide clarity on the FN Tier 1 agenda.
- FN to draft letter to DFO.
- SCC continue to update and share information with the Forum process seeking possible points of convergence.
- Roadmap continue to update the Forum process in order to seek efficiencies and reduce redundancy whole planning for an overall convergence.