

Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon

March 19-21 • Kamloops •
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 Spawning Initiative

Operational Management

1. SS 5-2 Chinook Management
2. Coho Exploitation Rate discussion
3. IFMP Feedback

FORUM

The Forum was well attended with over 80 participants in attendance. Members from the north coast were invited to observe the process anticipating something similar on the Skeena River and Haida Gwaii. Given the potentially large numbers of sockeye available for harvest this season ensured a high level of interest in the content being considered. Of particular interest was DFO's presentation of the Fraser River Sockeye Spawning Initiative (FRSSI). The FRSSI is very important since the process is responsible for setting the overall management approach for Fraser Sockeye, including escapement targets and exploitation rates.

Other important issues on the agenda were Chinook and Coho since these two species have important implication to structuring sockeye fisheries. Specifically, First Nations were curious about the potential increase in exploitation rates on interior Fraser Coho, and potential restrictions to protect spring and summer 5(2) chinook.

Finally, the agenda also included Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMP), which gives DFO an opportunity to hear some of the concerns being brought forth by Fraser and approach First Nations. First Nations are particularly concerned with the actual process for drafting and providing feedback; there is only one draft instead of two this year. This is the first time DFO will provide a single draft only, with an April 7th deadline for providing feedback. For First Nations the process seems rushed and less open to tinkering.

STRUCTURE

Day 1 (morning) - Tier 1 discussions: The morning of the first day was a presentation From the Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG). Some concern was expressed by DFO after a senior DFO manager sent out an excel workbook to a First Nations technician who subsequently sent the

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workbook out to the rest of the First Nations technician on the JTWG. After some discussion the matter has been resolved and should improve understanding of how and why information is shared at a highly technical level.

The main discussion points for the morning, tier 1 session dealt with FRSSI and the implications to First Nations proposed fisheries. Other important topics were proposed raising of the Coho exploitation rate, and zoned management approach for Chinook.

Day 1 (afternoon) – Tier 2: Exclusively focused on FRSSI the presentation was given by a DFO contractor, instead of a senior DFO senior manager as originally intended. The presentation was dense with a lot of technical information, graphs, and tables. The primary issues identified were that the information was not sent out prior to the engagement to allow FN time to digest the information. The second criticism was the actual presentation of the information. DFO handed out four documents which the presenter flipped back and forth from. Many of the participants found the process too confusing and cumbersome flipping and back and forth, especially since the information was so dense and in so many formats, i.e. graphs, tables, charts, etc...

Day 2 (all day)- Tier 2: To open up on day two, Senior DFO manager opened up by taking responsibility for the information and manner in which it was presented; he explained that DFO would try harder to do a better job disseminating information in the future. Also explained that the Forum and the IFMP (in its current form) do not line up, in terms of time lines. Some questions were raised about the purpose of the last forum proposed for Port Alberni, especially given the lateness and the fact that the IFMP will almost be signed off by that time.

Finally, it was also made clear that DFO is into another round of budget cuts, with an additional \$1.5m being cut from the region for 2014. Four Area Chief Positions will be eliminated. This will have consequences for consultation and may strain relations; the fall out remains to be seen.

Day 3 (morning only) – Tier 1: To begin with a member of the FNFC gave a presentation on the Salmon Coordinating Committee (SCC) which has been doing similar types of work that the Forum does. The talk was primarily focused on what changes are needed to improve efficiency while reducing redundancy and to look for areas of consolidation. The two groups are regularly interfacing and have a good working relationship.

After the SCC discussions a member from Haida Gwaii gave a brief talk about the situation in the north coast Skeena. The talk was mostly about how things are done there now and why they have come to observe the Forum process. IN all the presentation was very complimentary about the Forum, while understanding that whatever happens on the Skeena will be specifically designed as such.

Finally, the delegates spent time providing input into the content of a letter which will be sent out to the DFO identifying areas of concern, gaps in data, and possible next steps.

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Next steps:

- FN to draft letter to DFO.
- SCC continue to update and share information with the Forum process seeking possible points of convergence.
- Plan Port Alberni agenda
- Finalize the pre-season plan
- Ongoing feedback into IFMP

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