

Fisheries
and Oceans

Pêches
et Océans

Pacific Region
Lester Jantz
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Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
BC Interior



985 McGill Place

March 11, 2013

Mr. Ken Malloway
Chair of the Forum Planning Committee
on behalf of the First Nations Forum attendees
PO Box 188
Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Dear Mr. Malloway:

**Subject: Feedback from the January 23-25, 2013 Forum on Conservation
and Harvest Planning meeting in Richmond, BC.**

On behalf of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) I would like to thank you and the attendees of the above mentioned Forum meeting for their thoughtful feedback from the meeting held in Richmond, BC on January 23rd to the 25th. I hope that the following responses adequately addresses the concerns identified in your letter dated February 21, 2013.

Section 10 of the Fisheries Act

With respect to section 10 of the *Fisheries Act* and the use of fish to pay for management activities, for 2013 the department is not anticipating using fish to augment or replace operational budgets other than the normal suite of test fishery programs which have recently been funded by the federal government as a result of the Larocque decision. In situations where test fishery harvests may impact on rights based fisheries there will be consideration of how impacts could be minimized if not eliminated.

Information presented by DFO

Due to the limited time we often have for the Forum meetings reviewing the individual escapements for each stock of each species may not be efficient use of available time. This information is currently provided in-season as well as post-season by the stock assessment staff and could be reviewed by the technical working group if desired. Fraser sockeye have and will be managed by aggregates

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in accordance with the associated management objectives established for these aggregates in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plans. It is clearly understood by the department there will be variability in how the individual Conservation Units will perform within each aggregate, and management approaches will be developed which will attempt to address both conservation and harvest objectives for First Nation and other harvests if commercial TAC is available. I have attached the sockeye escapement updates provided by DFO stock assessment for your review.

Chinook Management

The department would prefer to have more information available to improve management of Fraser chinook returns however that is not the current situation. Despite this limitation of data, approaches to address conservation concerns have been developed through consultations and working with the First Nations members of the joint technical working group as well as others. Significant actions have been implemented in a number of marine and in-river fisheries where the largest impacts on stocks of concern were identified. Considerable progress has been made in addressing the harvest impacts on the Spring 4-2 management groups as well as the Spring and Summer 5-2 groups. Information from the Albion test fishery is the key in-season indicator of Spring and Summer 5-2 chinook abundance which is used to make management decisions for all fisheries that impact on these stocks. Through the Southern BC chinook strategic planning process it is hoped that a more holistic approach will be developed to address serious conservation issues for all chinook stocks in Southern British Columbia. Please note the importance of providing Coded Wire Tags from harvested Chinook back to DFO. Anything that First Nations can do to support the return of tags will help to improve the management of these fisheries.

Principles and Guidelines (P&G) for management of Fraser R. sockeye

The P&G document was recently developed by the department to assist in discussing with First Nations and others the management principles and decision making process for Fraser sockeye. The objective is to get feedback from all groups on the draft principles after which discussions will occur relating to guidelines for implementation. The department is committed to considering the recommendations from all First Nations as well as other groups. Not all recommendations are adopted by the department as there is often not consensus within or between groups and the department has the responsibility to ensure conservation objectives are addressed.

Bills C-38 and C-45.

The Department is developing its engagement plan with respect to the policy development around the implementation of the *Fisheries Act* amendments and regulations. Your input with respect to an approach for engaging First Nations in the Fraser and marine area would be appreciated. Further, any

regulations developed will proceed through the federal government regulatory process and will be available for consultation purposes through pre-publication in *Canada Gazette*, Part 1. Regulations are currently under development to identify information requirements and time limits for the issuance of Ministerial [Paragraph 35(2)(b)] authorizations under the *Fisheries Act* and may be forthcoming for consultation in the spring of 2013.

Early Summer Run aggregate and Late Summer Run aggregate

The department shares your concerns about the low escapement levels observed in a number of sockeye CU's in recent years and will be working closely with First Nations and others to address these issues in the future. Through the development of the Principles and Guidelines document specific management approaches may be developed to address these situations.

Invasive Species

Common carp have been present in BC waterways for over 100 years. Eradication of these fish is not possible without destroying the other fish species present in the same waterways. These fish have co-existed with salmon and other indigenous freshwater species over this time period with no discernable impacts observed. If there is a desire from First Nations for work to be done to better understand this species it will need to be considered within existing funding sources and priorities.

Forum Agenda's

The recommendation from First Nations to not use of the FORUM process to discuss Chapter 4 renewal is both a surprise as well as a concern to DFO. Separate meetings have been held to discuss Chapter 4 renewal with the majority of the attendees being a subset of the same people that participate in the FORUM meetings. First Nations have expressed concerns about meeting burnout on a number of occasions so using the FORUM to discuss and provide updates on this topic helps to address this issue. In addition the department intends to report out on recommendations from previous FORUM meetings as it has in the past.

I would again like to thank you and all participants from the January FORUM meeting in Richmond. Your input and contributions through this process are greatly appreciated. Sincerely yours,



A. Lester Jantz
Acting Area Director,
BC Interior