

Sent: 28-May-2019 18:12:59
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Bcc:
Subject: March 29, 2019 - 2019 Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning - Malloway
Attachments: 0413_001.pdf

Grand Chief Ken Malloway
Chairperson
Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat
c/o Nicola Tribal Association
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Dear Chief Malloway:

Thank you for your March 29, 2019 correspondence regarding your organization's feedback on the Kamloops Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning.

I underscore how much Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) values the feedback and recommendations provided by First Nations participants at the Forum. DFO makes final decisions only after great care is taken in reviewing this feedback, in addition to considering other recommendations received and the best available science. Input from First Nations has been very helpful in informing management plans, and DFO anticipates that this will continue as we move forward.

As DFO approaches an agreement with the Fraser Salmon Management Council (FSMC) on collaborative governance of Fraser River salmon, we anticipate working with the FRAFS Executive Committee and FSMC to move towards a strengthened approach to working with First Nations throughout the Fraser salmon migratory route. The engagement of FRAFS is critical in supporting a transition to this approach.

Chinook Management

The recommendations provided in your letters of both March 29 and February 21 were included in the package of feedback and recommendations received by the Department.

The Department agrees that conservation of Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern is the highest priority guiding management, and on April 16, 2019, the Government of Canada announced new fisheries management measures to address the Fraser River Chinook decline.

Achieving the conservation of at-risk Fraser River Spring 42, Spring 52, and Summer 52 Chinook stocks requires significant actions in commercial troll, recreational, and First Nations fisheries in times and areas where at-risk Fraser River Chinook are encountered. Fishery Notice 0395 contains details on 2019 commercial, recreational, and Aboriginal Fraser River Chinook conservation measures and reductions in coast-wide recreational annual limits for Chinook in tidal waters.

While conservation of at-risk Fraser River Chinook is the primary objective in managing the resource, the Department is also committed to respecting constitutional and Treaty obligations to provide priority for First Nations harvest opportunities for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes after conservation requirements are met.

Conservation measures for Fraser River Spring 42, Spring 52, and Summer 52 Chinook will constrain First Nations Chinook harvest opportunities while these at-risk Fraser River Chinook or other stocks of concern (e.g., Early Stuart Sockeye) migrate through fishing areas. However, DFO is providing First Nations in the Fraser River with limited Fraser River Chinook directed fishing opportunities to harvest small numbers of Chinook for ceremonial purposes until July 15.

While the overall abundance of Chinook returning to the Fraser River in 2019 is uncertain, DFO is also planning measures to increase the abundance of Chinook reaching the Fraser River in August to support Fraser First Nations FSC fishing opportunities. This includes an extended closure of the commercial troll fishery in northern British Columbia, which is intended to support Fraser River FSC fisheries by passing through more of the abundant Summer 41 (South Thompson) Chinook that typically comprise 20 to 30 percent of troll harvests. In addition, recreational salmon fisheries in southern BC will remain at reduced limits of one (1) Chinook per day after the Chinook non-retention period ends (i.e., after July 15 or August 1 depending on area; see below) and recreational fisheries in the Fraser River will remain closed until at least August 23. These measures are intended to support increased availability of Summer 41 and Fall Chinook for harvest during First Nations fisheries in August and September.

Despite the difficulties expected from these new fishery management measures, they are necessary to respond to the serious declines in these important Fraser River Chinook populations. The Department will be following up with First Nations, the Province of British Columbia, and stakeholders in the coming months to establish a process for addressing a broad range of issues impacting Chinook stocks. Establishing a process to have these important discussions will play a vital role in determining how best to steward this resource going forward and determining what options may exist to further address the social, cultural, and economic importance of these Chinook stocks. This will require everyone to work toward identifying mutually beneficial solutions and ensuring conservation objectives are met to provide for future opportunities.

Sockeye/Pink

Thank you for providing information with regards to the Sockeye escapement options supported by most participating First Nations and the information that a four-week window closure is also supported by most groups. The Department has also received letters from First Nations groups and organizations on the draft Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP), and some alternative recommendations that have been made. DFO will carefully review the recommendations received from First Nations and others, and a final decision on the 2019 Fraser River Sockeye escapement plan and length of window closure will be provided in the IFMP to be released in June.

Interior Fraser River Steelhead

I am sorry to hear that there was insufficient time to discuss Interior Fraser River (IFR) steelhead during your Tier 1 session; DFO has received recommendations via letters from First Nations on the draft southern BC Salmon IFMP. A final decision will be included in the final version of the IFMP, to be released in June.

Interior Fraser River Coho

Your recommendation on the 2019 objective for IFR coho has been forwarded for inclusion in recommendations to the 2019–20 IFMP. A final decision will be included in the final version of the IFMP, to be released in June.

UNDRIP/Reconciliation

It is my understanding that the purpose of the Forums was to discuss annual management issues for Fraser-bound salmon stocks. The discussion on reconciliation will be a much larger and ongoing discussion. This might be an appropriate topic to discuss at a future Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat (FRAFS) executive committee meeting. David Didluck, Regional Director, Reconciliation and Partnerships and I would welcome your advice on how and where to continue this conversation.

The Department acknowledges the strong commitment to conserving Fraser River salmon populations expressed by all First Nations. Thank you for your cooperation in protecting these important salmon stocks. The Department also appreciates the FRAFS's ongoing involvement and input to DFO's planning and advisory processes. Your input and advice on ways and means to improve engagement in these processes is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Reid
Regional Director General
Pacific Region