



Watershed Talk

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
fisheries representatives and their organizations

KING SOLOMON AND THE EARLY STUART SOCKEYE

King Solomon did a lot of interesting things, but he may be most famous for solving a domestic dispute. It's a well-known story. Two women in the same village had babies at about the same time, and one of the babies died. Both women claimed the remaining baby as their own, and King Solomon was asked to decide which of the women the baby's true mother was. He told a soldier to cut the baby in half and give half to each woman. Solomon didn't kill the baby, but instead gave the child to the woman that gave up her claim rather than have the baby harmed.

I'm sure this has nothing to do with dividing up early Stuart sockeye, but a wise man like King Solomon might be able to help. DFO scientists think that about 200,000 early Stuart sockeye will return to the Fraser this year. The long-term escapement goal for Early Stuart sockeye is about 200,000, but in the last while we've tried to put from 75,000 to 90,000 on the spawning grounds. Putting 90,000 on the spawning grounds can be tricky, because we have trouble figuring out how many early Stuart sockeye are entering the river, and we often see fewer fish on the spawning grounds than we expected to see. If we think we have enough Stuart sockeye entering the river, and open fisheries, and then find out there are fewer fish than we thought, the burden of conservation falls on the people upriver that depend on early Stuart sockeye the most, and have the least opportunity to harvest fish from other stocks. This has happened before.

Even so, depending on the escapement goal we set, there could be early Stuart sockeye to harvest this year, but there will probably not be enough to allow all First Nations to

harvest as many as they want or need. How do we decide how many early Stuart sockeye to harvest, and then decide who will harvest them? In 1996 the available early Stuart sockeye were divided up using percentages based on historical shares. No one seemed very happy with this approach. Everyone agreed that the percentages used in 1996 would just be used in 1996, and that new arrangements would be required in the future, but try as we might, we've never been able to come to any agreement. Here it is, 2004, the fish are on the way, and DFO wants to know how Fraser First Nations would like to carve up the early Stuart baby. I think we have three general options to consider.

- 1) Don't fish early Stuart at all. The stocks are weak, and it's an opportunity to aggressively rebuild this run.
- 2) Harvest very conservatively, allowing modest harvest only in the upper Fraser. Most of the fish will go to escapement, but the needs of Upper Fraser people will be given priority.
- 3) Set an escapement goal similar to past years, add a buffer for management error, and try and develop a formula for dividing up the surplus. If we fail, DFO will divide them up for us. Most likely they will use the arrangements developed in 1996.

Fortunately we don't have to decide right now. We have a few weeks to think about it.

For further information, contact Ken Wilson at (604) 301-0418 or wilsonkh@telus.net

FISHERIES COURSE OFFERED

The Fisheries and Aquaculture Extension Program at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo, BC is pleased to announce a new course offering:

Project Management for Natural Resource Managers – Level 1

A comprehensive, three-day 'hands-on' introduction and overview of standard and fundamental project management skills, abilities and procedures common to natural resource management projects.

This course will be held in the following communities:

Surrey:	March 9 – March 11
Kelowna:	March 23 – March 25
Nanaimo:	March 29 – March 31
Prince George:	April 20 – April 22
Williams Lake:	April 6 – April 8
Terrace:	May 17 – May 19
Fort St. James:	July 5 – July 7

Details on our web page:
<http://www.mala.ca/faep/fisheries/courses/pmnr.htm>

Visit our web site for full course listings, updates, details and registration forms:

<http://www.mala.ca/faep/>

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 30/04: Tier One Meeting.
Location TBA.