

Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Effective February 21, 2017

Purpose

The Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) was formed to foster greater transparency and improved understanding between First Nations and DFO with respect to technical issues encompassing Fraser River salmon management. Key tasks for the JTWG include the following:

1. Work together and review on a species and/or stock specific basis the data, assumptions, and theories that were used or will be used to guide and assess existing or proposed fishery plans and management decisions.
2. Discuss and incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) - when possible and appropriate - to augment technical and management information related to the technical process.
3. Provide the assessment of the plans and management actions as they relate to DFO and First Nations objectives.

For greater clarity and certainty, the JTWG is a collaborative technical group that discusses/debates technical information and data on its own merits and is not, in and of itself, a consultation body. Conclusions arrived at from those discussions may then be provided to First Nations and DFO who may in turn use the information when discussing fishery management issues on a bi-lateral basis. Both the human and financial resources are limited for First Nations' and DFO technical staff. Often, the limits of time and capacity do not permit a complete or thorough examination of all the technical aspects of the more complicated technical and management issues. Therefore, the Joint Technical Working Group can support the exchange and initial discussion of information, but cannot fulfill requirements for deep and meaningful understanding on all issues.

Structure and Process

1. The JTWG receives guidance from the FRAFS Executive Committee. However, it is understood that individual participants in the JTWG will receive direction from their respective organizations.
2. The JTWG is a multilateral working group made up of DFO and First Nation participants who can contribute in a meaningful way to a technical assessment of the information under review.
3. Each organization (DFO and First Nations' organizations) will select those people for participation who they consider to be technically qualified to examine and discuss the topic at hand.

4. The JTWG meetings are coordinated through the FRAFS Fraser Fisheries Biologist 3 and a DFO biologist.
5. The chairing of each meeting will alternate between DFO and First Nations on a meeting by meeting basis. The meeting chair will designate a recorder at each meeting.
6. Agenda development will be by consensus/agreement of JTWG participants.
7. Conclusions, recommendations, and/or decisions as appropriate will be made by consensus when possible.
8. Data, assumptions, and theories that were used or will be used to guide and assess existing or proposed fishery plans and management decisions will be considered “reviewed” by the JTWG only if agreed by consensus. Consensus is defined as general agreement by all participants.
9. Where consensus is not achieved on a specific issue, or when time and resources available for review are insufficient, the JTWG will report out on information that was presented, identifying that technical agreement was not achieved. In its report, the JTWG will identify the alternative perspectives considered by the JTWG, as well as potential solutions and options for moving forward. The item in question may be considered still under review. The JTWG report will be consistent with the Reporting Section and may include the following action (see number 10 below):
10. Issues may be referred to the FRAFS EC - when they cannot be addressed through the JTWG process - for the following reasons:
 - a. Lack of consensus on a technical issue
 - b. Issue is a management/policy level discussion item that is not directly technical
 - c. The technical rationale or background data for the management/policy issue has not been provided to the JTWG

Reporting

1. The JTWG will respond in a timely fashion to requests from the FRAFS Executive Committee for meetings and reports.
2. The JTWG will disseminate information and results of its activities through the FRAFS Communications Coordinator, the Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning, and sub-watershed First Nations fisheries processes, as appropriate, and to the FRAFS Executive Committee via the Operations Manager.
3. Individual participants of the JTWG will also report back to their respective organizations, if channels have been identified by those organizations.
4. The meeting chair will provide the meeting notes and the JTWG Management/Issues tracker Excel workbook to the FRAFS Operations Manager who will disseminate the notes and workbook to the FRAFS Executive Committee as soon as the final meeting notes are complete and after each update to the JTWG Management/Issue Tracker workbook.

Schedule

The FRAFS agreement is multi-year and the activities of the JTWG are expected to be undertaken until the expiration of the FRAFS agreement. The JTWG will determine its meeting frequency and schedule as needed to advance the Purpose of the JTWG.

Funding

Each participant is funded by her/his own organization. However, FRAFS has allocated an annual budget to provide for meeting venue costs including refreshments and working lunches.