



FRASER RIVER ABORIGINAL FISHERIES SECRETARIAT

c/o Nicola Tribal Association
PO Box 188 • Merritt, BC • V1K 1B8
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February 13, 2017

Rebecca Reid,
Regional Director-General,
Department of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard,
Vancouver, B.C.

VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT ONLY

RE: January 24 - 26 2017 FORUM ON CONSERVATION AND HARVEST PLANNING, RICHMOND, BC

Dear Rebecca Reid,

The first of 3, 2017 Forums on Conservation and Harvest Planning events was held, January 24 – 26, 2017 in Richmond, BC. Forum attendees travelled from the Marine Approach and Fraser River areas to participate. The following summary outlines key points of discussion, requests for additional information, advice, recommendations, and actions requested of the Department. A common theme throughout, is the need for increased transparency and timely information sharing.

IFMP Monitoring, assessment, and program delivery: First Nations and technical staff should be able to rely on transparent, timely, and accurate information sharing by the Department to build trusting, collaborative working relationships. Unfortunately, there were several instances last season where information was not effectively shared with First Nations. Please address the following recommendations in order to improve transparency and information sharing:

- In 2016, there were critical discrepancies between Fishing Areas the Department announced would be monitored pre-season and in-season, and those that were actually monitored. **To resolve this issue for 2017 and beyond: Use the stock assessment section in the IFMP Section 13 to outline all anticipated catch monitoring and stock assessment programs for all fisheries.** Changes to monitoring (creel and catch) and assessment programs which affect First Nations must be discussed **prior to the post-season.** Follow with a post-season report/discussion outlining what was actually carried out along with the rationale for any discrepancies.
- Provide adequate details to enable a clear understanding of creel methods, and the application of iREC and its limitations.
- Provide First Nations technical staff with access to DFO data from recreational fisheries, especially those in marine areas. These data, coupled with a clear understanding of the methods used to collect the data, and rationale for the creel designs and programs applied, should allow First Nations to more meaningfully participate in these processes in the future.



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Several related requests from Forum participants included:

- The monitoring and compliance (M&C) Panel should be invited to a future forum to present on their work.
- Stronger regulation of recreational fisheries, with area- and species-specific stamps to control what anglers are allowed to catch is needed, as well as seasonal closures and more detailed reporting.
- Please provide a report on how PICFI funding was spent and outline the PICFI program results.

Precautionary Approach and Chinook:

The current management regime for Spring and Summer 5(2) Chinook was discussed in the context of changing environmental conditions and the overarching need for a complete understanding of the information available to help interpret the current situation. Dr. Kim Hyatt outlined that one of the ways the Department can respond to the unusual environmental conditions observed in 2014-2016 is to have more precautionary management in place, especially in the absence of real-time monitoring data. The Department's current zoned approach for managing recreational Chinook fisheries is complex, and C&P noted the challenge of enforcing specific measures that vary by area.

In an environment of complex management and changing/unfavorable environmental conditions, First Nations are looking for a complete understanding of fisheries management information that is available, in order to develop practical, and meaningful recommendations for improvement. **Please provide First Nations with a complete inventory of DNA samples taken from Chinook caught in recreational fisheries in BC, including in the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca, as well as the West and North Coast of Vancouver Island.** Flagging those which have been processed will help First Nations collaboratively take steps with DFO to support additional processing and analysis if needed. First Nations currently have been granted access only to pieces of information, and must make recommendations based on these. For instance: A relatively small sample of processed DNA recently received by the JTWG shows that Mid and Upper Fraser Chinook stocks are being caught outside of the current zoned management areas. Based on this, First Nations recommend that **simplified, consistent, stronger and more precautionary Zoned management measures (particularly Zone 1) that apply for all fisheries management areas are needed.** In addition, areas must be expanded to include **all** areas where Spring 5(2) and Summer 5(2) Chinook are being caught by recreational anglers.

Interior Fraser Coho:

The lack of progress in restoring Interior Fraser Coho since 1998 continues to have substantial impacts on First Nations. Forum participants shared on-going concerns, many of which have been raised before, but not adequately addressed by the Department. These include: the lack of information on Lower Fraser Coho; the need for a clearer explanation of DFO's stock assessment plan; the necessity to remain below the 3% exploitation rate cap in a Fraser Pink run year and limit Coho by-catch while managing those fisheries for priority access; and First Nations' desire to avoid DFO's Coho management actions implemented in 2014. It was also noted that the COSEWIC listing for Interior Fraser Coho has been



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changed to Threatened from Endangered. **Please explain the rationale for upgrading status for the listing of Interior Fraser Coho.**

Chum:

There was a request to review and discuss the detailed PST Chum model as well as the DFO assessment model in order to inform 2017 fisheries planning.

Pink:

In 2013, the Department applied in-season measures to limit total impacts to sockeye during pink fisheries to 1% (essentially this policy allocated sockeye bycatch on a commercial vessel-by-vessel basis). Please quantify the effectiveness of these measures at the March forum. Are similar measures being considered for 2017?

Steelhead:

At previous Forums, participants have expressed the need for First Nation engagement with Provincial and Federal Interior Fraser Steelhead planning processes. Despite these requests, DFO outlined the Federal and Provincial plan to work together, and without First Nations, on MSC Condition 14. **First Nation objectives must be included in all aspects, including ToR development, of this process.**

Chinook 5-year review:

DFO has committed to carry out a review of Chinook management, and recently completed their consultation on the draft terms of reference for the “Review of Fraser River Chinook Management Approach”. FRAFS has been allocated some funds to support the technical aspects of the review prior to the end of this fiscal. Forum participants considered several options proposed by the Department for moving forward with the review. Participants valued the need to act quickly, and as a result, initial support was shown for First Nations /stakeholder involvement at the technical level (analogous to the CSPI process). **The technical process must be designed so that only technical people are involved, all technical participants work collaboratively/transparently, at the same level, and must include First Nation technical personnel from the Fraser River and approach areas.**

Southern Endowment Fund:

These projects provide excellent opportunities for building First Nations’ capacity. Concerns were raised about communication gaps and the need for more consultation to inform and facilitate First Nations partnerships within their territories – from proposal to project phases. **Please provide an overview of all current and proposed projects at a future Forum.**

The Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning series is a first step in what should be a multi-step consultation process about DFO’s stock and harvest management plans that could potentially affect the exercise of aboriginal fishing rights. Thank you for incorporating the recommendations and advice provided by Forum participants into this year’s management planning process, and we look forward to a written response from the Department in the near future.



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Respectfully,

Ken Malloway, FRAFS Chairperson,
On behalf of First Nation participants at the January 24 – 26, 2017 Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning

CC:

Fraser River and Approach First Nations

First Nation Fisheries Council

Honourable Dominic LeBlanc

Catherine Blewett

Angela Bate

Jeff Grout

Jennifer Nener

Stu Cartwright

FRAFS Executive Committee, Biologists, Operations Manager, Communications Manager