

Tier 2 Meeting Notes
Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning
March 19-20, 2014
Holiday inn, Kamloops, BC

DAY ONE: MAR. 19, 2014

Documents referenced below can be referenced at: <http://frafs.ca/node/43>

FRSSI

Comment: Don't leave Areas 11, 12 and 13 out of the picture. By the time September rolls around, the salmon have gone by. We have to figure out something with the TAM rules so that we all get our share.

A: TAM rules are designed to deal with the multitude of issues on the Fraser, not just Areas 11-13. The problem is 2013 was the prediction of mortality (MA) for Summers which resulted in closures for almost all fisheries, not the TAM rule.

Q: FRSSI is based on managing sockeye as an aggregate. What about alternative harvest strategies that take into account the weaker stocks in the watershed?

A: The FRSSI model can look at alternative harvest strategies but with the current strategy we've implemented approaches to reduce impacts on the weaker stocks. The statistics are applied to the aggregate, but the models have 18 stocks and you can look individually.

Comment: In 2010, we had creeks in the Upper Fraser where salmon were non-existent. We have the capacity to handle spawners.

A: Are there potential ESSR-free systems? If ESSR's proceed they will occur in areas where impacts on lower productivity stocks will be marginal or non-existent..

Comment about the snow pack:

A: The overall snow pack is about average. It could still accumulate in April-May and this feeds into our in-season management.

Q: Does the LEAR include Use of Fish? If it does, how many?

A: With a run of 23 million sockeye, the test fishery will take 120,000 sockeye.

Q: Re: Option 1, Summers. Why is there such a low Management Adjustment?

A: Historically there's a low mortality. The median is used.

Q: Why is DFO putting so much emphasis on ESSR?

A: The ESSR is a draft policy; it doesn't specifically state that it's for enhancement. This is coming to the surface now to stimulate discussion on how to handle large escapements from large runs (ex.: Chilko). We're seeking your input: How many spawners do we want to put into the system (ex.: Adams River)?

Q: Do you take into account how the wind and rain effect water temperature?

A: Environmental components are included in the modelling.

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Comment: The question is: What if the run is really big this year? We have to have these discussions now.

Comment: Thank you for your hard work, but, perhaps you could put two hand-outs in one. When the information is on different documents it's difficult to follow.

DAY TWO – MARCH 20, 2014

Comments from DFO:

Looking ahead:

- Some thoughts; nothing set in stone.
- Forum could become part of the Fraser Salmon Management Council (what was the “Road Map”).
- Current Forum schedule doesn't line up with the new IFMP timeline. For example, next year the Forum could be held: end of January; early March; and April. This would also avoid the March Break.
- Encourage First Nations to give their input to the Forum Planning Committee.

Organizational Changes

Pacific region positions eliminated as per federal government cuts; focus on eliminating positions that were vacant. The impact on the Pacific region: four Area Chief of Resource Management positions eliminated. DFO objective is to not impact delivery to “partners.” The question today: How will ACRM workload be re-assigned?

Q: Are there any red flags for people to be aware of re: the Options?

A: No. I encourage people to look at the tables; they're based on historical medians for MA's and will change in-season. (Ex.: range of spawner abundance on page 33).

Q: Has DFO considered impact on steelhead if the Exploitation Rate (ER) on late run sockeye is increased?

A: The emphasis in September is for fisheries to be selective during the coho window.

Q: How is risk captured in the model?

A: Risk assessment was part of the 2006 workshops.

Q: Why do you need such a large percentage of escapement? How do you come up with the 21% to 72% range?

A: 2010 was a P90 on a low productivity forecast. Where this ends up in-season is anybody's guess.

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Q: Can we look at 2010 in-season decision making as a way to guide 2014 actions as part of our planning?

A: Yes we normally review previous years in making decisions going forward.

Comment: Re: delivery of information from DFO to FN. The reality is that we have one lower Fraser forum next week and it's going to be hard to get educational responses delivered on this timeline.

A: We had to wait on the CSAS and science work on coho and sockeye and we couldn't begin work until mid-February. I appreciate that it's a huge challenge.

Follow up Q: What's the next step?

A: First Nations can respond as they see fit. A global recommendation in a letter would be great.

Q: Following up on weaker stocks, for example, Cultus Lake. Soowahlie has worked with other user groups (Tier 3) but the modelling seems to disregard our collaborative work. What are the commercial sector's proposals to the IFMP? What are their plans (what fish are they taking and when)?

A: We ask all groups for input for the draft IFMP. We have only received verbal comments; obviously they want higher exploitation. We use the PSC pre-season plan model incorporating all fisheries.

Q: With respect to "windows" on the front end (Early Stuart) and the back (coho). How much are we saving with those windows?

A: If lower than P50, or, if discharge conditions are bad, then, in late June, early July, then windows (fishing restrictions) could be in place.

Q: Paul Sprout's vision was that there'd be 50% First Nations representation and a First Nations Chair on the Fraser Panel. Where are we today?

A: No change from the past at this time. There are three First Nations representatives on the Fraser Panel.

Comment: Last summer the FRAFS Executive Committee wrote the RDG about the importance of First Nations representation on the Panel.

Q: Should there be a full-on fishery for Early Stuarts? It has been red zoned for quite a few years. Have you been right with the forecasts over the past few years once the numbers come in? For example, Chilko and Adams made up the bulk of 2010. What's the indication that this'll be the case in 2014?

A: The forecast provides a broad range. It's an uncertain science. Most times the return falls in the range. Management focuses on the in-season information from test fisheries and environmental conditions when making decisions for Early Stuarts and the forecast is not used.

Q: Regarding Spring and Summer 5/2 Chinook. If there are earlier fisheries on Sockeye, I'm concerned about by-catch of the 5/2 Chinook. What does DFO think about by-catch in the commercial sector?

A: There are overlaps in timing of Chinook and sockeye. Generally Commercial fisheries targeting sockeye have non-retention restrictions for Chinook. Attempts will be made to minimize the impacts on Chinook.

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Interior Fraser Coho (IFC)

Q: Page 5 Table. It's important to distinguish between long-term and 2014 ER rate. What is the question here?

A: The department is seeking advice on preferred approaches for the 2014 season.

Q: Re: Options. It's like putting the cart before the horse. Biologically-based benchmarks required before moving IFC from low to moderate? What's the process for moving from low to moderate status at the international level?

A: The Technical Committee has identified low-medium-high in Chapter 5 zones. Currently scheduled for fall as part of CSAS and WSP. Canada has identified that we've been in the low zone and may still be. The work has yet to be done to identify the threshold to make the decision to move to moderate. We'll have thresholds data for next year. There's nothing that precludes us from fishing in the moderate zone this year. The key question is what flexibility is required to conduct fisheries in 2014 considering the potential for an extremely large sockeye return.

Comment: If you can choose to move from low to moderate without ER on an endangered stock without biological data – that isn't precautionary.

Comment: 3% ER on IFC will put constraints on sockeye.

Comment: DFO is managing too many stocks without required data (ex.: Early Timed Chinook; coho) And DFO is saying pick an option, or, you can't go fishing.

Q: Is there any coho going to be used under Use of Fish?

A: Not directly but some (gn) test fisheries do kill coho so should they be retained?

Q: What is the sharing plan between First Nations from the marine area to the upper watershed?

A: We have asked this group for your views on how this should be done. The department has used a proportional sharing approach in the past and will use again unless there is a consensus recommendation put forward from FN.

Q: I'm concerned about extirpation of Nahatlach coho because of heavier fishing on sockeye.

A: Impacts are based on coded wire tag information and timing of stocks so do not think it would be much different for individual stocks within the IFC return.

Q: How is DFO taking recommendations from off the floor?

A: Minutes are being recorded for the meeting but the preferred approach would be in letters to the Department which will be responded to.

Q: How do decide on the language you use when framing questions (ex.: "Canadian fish")?

A: Provide to the department the language that you think is important.

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Comment: It's troubling when the department rushes to do analysis using documents that haven't been officially released. In the case of coho, there is much uncertainty:

- Uncertainty re: assessment
- Status assessment: no biological benchmarks
- Fishing has contributed to negative growth in six of the past 15 years; most recently 2010
- DFO paper ("RES" doc) "significant risks" at the 20,000 level
- Bias of modelled Exploitation Rate: How are capturing the uncertainty and bias in modelling rates?
- Annual distribution of food fishing throughout the watershed: Are we rushing over things? We have to think of the initial recovery.

A: These points highlight what DFO science has looked at and the CSAS document suggests ER's up to 30% result in a 50% probability of the IFC escapement being at 20,000 or larger for the longer term. We're aware of these uncertainties and risks.

Q: Regarding the uncertainty in the ER modelling and escapement estimates: How are you capturing this uncertainty and risk in management plans for 2014?

A: Decisions have not been made for 2014 at this time but the risks will be considered.

Chinook/ Steelhead

Q: Re: slide 6 – Changes to conditions of license on Tidal waters Sport fishing license

A: Reporting to the DFO rep is mandatory, if asked.

Q: Re: SFAB proposal in IFMP. Changing management actions certain zones for Spring 5/2 Chinook. Depending on what zone we're in, longer 4/2 or 5/2 protections result in longer 4/2 protection. First Nations haven't seen the modelling behind that.

A: SFAB folks worked with the department to look at the implications of the regulation change, they will be meeting the reductions set out in the April, 2012 letter. We can share the modelling work.

Comment: This has to happen ASAP as it feeds into the IFMP.

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Questions re: Spring/Summer 5/2 in April:

What will the commercial net impacts be on 5/2 (not just the north; more info for Areas B,D,E)?

How will that impact how the burden will be shared by the sectors?

A: This question should be raised at the JTWG for a more detailed discussion in the future looking at the first part of the question in particular.

Questions re: IREC internet survey

- What percentage of recreational fishers will be contacted?
- Is it a % of BC-based or of all users?
- How often will a recreational fisher be approached and asked questions by DFO in the 77,000 square kilometers around Vancouver Island?

A: The internet survey covers approx. 30% of all Tidal water license holders. The CREEL Survey is in our view the best way to get information. We use it as much as we can.

Q: Over the years what have been the commercial and recreational sector's proposals, the decisions and rationale.

A: The current IFMP Issues table has the proposals as well as they are in the IFMP. The upcoming IFMP issues table will have decisions and rationale.

Q: Does DFO keep statistics on how many times First Nations information is used?

A: First Nations recommendations are reviewed along with all of the other input into the IFMP.

Q: What can we do to pull this information together?

Comment: Dr. Levy's will be producing a document for the FNFC, this can be print out and distributed before the next Forum.

Q: What was the exploitation rate for Spring 4/2 Chinook in 2013?

A: We're waiting for final coded wire tag results. In 2010 the Exploitation Rates were in the 10% range; in 2011, 15 to 19%; and in 2012, it was 28%. There was an increase even though the same management plans were in place. It is expected that the results on an annual basis will be somewhat variable given the small amount of encounters in some fisheries, annual differences in data quality, as well as annual changes in behavior or migration timing. Most impacts were in the lower Fraser. In the IFMP, there are concerns for Spring 4/2.

Comment: It seems that just when we get a handle on Chinook, something new comes up. More resources are directed towards sockeye and we have to look at directing resources towards Chinook

Response: I think that this'll be an ongoing problem for years to come. Stock Assessments budgets have been going down and program costs are going up.

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Comment: Lower Fraser has built capacity re: coded wire tag (2011-13). There were many more tags than usual recovered in 2013. It'll be interesting to see those results.

Comment: it's troublesome to hear the same things said at the meetings over the years. Red zones are opportunities lost to First nations trying to provide food for our communities. Everyday an angler can let 10 fish go. The rec fishery has to be managed the same as the other fisheries. It's the biggest issue today. Catch and release is killing our ocean. And I don't support a rec fishery on the Fraser when people up river go without fish.

Comment: I get when DFO asks, "What does consensus mean?" Our elders taught us how to agree.

Comment: We need scientifically supported, independently verified measurements to set objectives for Chinook.
A: DFO currently doesn't have the resources to do more assessment work on Chinook In particular this year things are worse because it is a dominant sockeye year.