

## **Ensuring Harmony and Safety on the Lower Fraser During A Time of Salmon Abundance: An Educational Opportunity for Long Term Change**

**Context:** A March 5, 2014 article in the Globe and Mail reports that fisheries scientists are anticipating the largest sockeye salmon run in over 100 years returning to the Fraser River this summer. Current forecasts range from a low of 7.3 million to a high of 72.5 million fish returning with a 50% probability of the return being either greater than or less than 23 million sockeye. A return in the mid to upper end of this scale would exceed the large number of sockeye that returned in 2010, when about 28 million sockeye found their way into the Fraser River and a number of community and safety issues (e.g. river access, parking, trespassing, sanitation and missed educational opportunities) emerged.

The significant Fraser run is expected because the sockeye returning are the offspring of the 2010 run. Ocean conditions have been very good for salmon for the past three years, and an extraordinary large number of young sockeye migrated out of the Fraser River Estuary in the spring of 2012. Those fish would have encountered prime conditions, with flows of cold water that salmon prefer and are rich with zooplankton and phytoplankton blooms that young fish eat.

Even if sockeye returns just reach the 50% probability level of 23 million, this would be an exceptional run in a river where stocks have declined dramatically for nearly two decades, with runs of two to four million being common. The potential for elevated community issues (as experienced in 2010) may be further exacerbated this summer if Fraser River sockeye returns reach or exceed the levels seen in 2010.

**Issue:** With the record numbers of sockeye in 2010 came a significant increase in sport fishers seeking to fish along the Lower Fraser River between Hope and Agassiz. A number of challenges resulted, including unsafe parking on the Trans Canada Highway, railway crossing violations, trespassing on First Nations lands, increased competition for access to specific fishing locations, illegal garbage dumping, littering and sanitation issues in the absence of portable toilets.

The abundant run in 2010 represented a lost opportunity for British Columbians, especially recreational anglers and First Nations fishers, to interact more harmoniously in that time of abundance.

Given the potential for a sockeye return that may far exceed that in 2010, it is critical that proactive engagement and awareness raising, along with sound planning and infrastructure enhancements along the Fraser River be initiated as soon as possible. Rather than the stories of conflict in 2010, with such measures in place, 2014 could be a banner year for enhancing understanding, appreciation and knowledge about wild salmon and its spiritual and cultural significance to First Nations and all British Columbians. If we choose to act now, we can help ensure harmony and safety on the Fraser River during a time of great abundance.

**Proposal:** In order to proactively engage relevant interests to ensure harmony and safety on the Fraser River during the 2014 sockeye run, the Fraser Basin Council (FBC) proposes the following activities:

Tapping into the extensive network of relevant interests along the Lower Fraser River and beyond, the FBC would convene a solutions dialogue (i.e. workshop) to produce a Lower Fraser Collaborative Action Plan that would include the following information:

1. The potential scale and geographic extent of the influx of anglers into the Lower Fraser River area at various times during the run;
2. Anticipated impacts and associated logistical challenges associated with the influx of anglers;
3. Infrastructure solutions to address the influx of anglers, for example, portable toilets, public safety, wild salmon educational and cultural awareness signage, garbage dumpsters at specific high-traffic locations, camping facilities, temporary parking areas and environmental protection measures; and
4. Educational and awareness-raising opportunities including building understanding of the diversity and significance of Fraser River

salmon and the critical importance of collaborative and responsible resource management.

Prior to the workshop, the FBC will conduct one-on-one interviews with representatives of all relevant interests. These interviews would provide input to a draft resource document summarizing all pertinent issues, opportunities, potential solutions and related actions. This resource document would then serve as focal point for discussion at a solutions dialogue that would in turn help finalize the Lower Fraser Collaborative Action Plan. The workshop would also endeavor to reach agreement on roles, timelines and responsibilities for the various actions.

The overall objective of this initiative is to develop and implement the Lower Fraser Collaborative Action Plan to:

- Mitigate any adverse impacts associated with intensified fishing activities through enhanced collaboration among First Nations, recreational fishers, federal and local agencies, railways and others; and
- Take full advantage of educational and relationship building opportunities arising from the abundant sockeye run.

**Prospective Partners:**

- Fraser Basin Council
- Pacific Salmon Foundation
- Cheam First Nation
- Fraser Salmon Table
- First Nations Fisheries Council
- Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Tides Canada
- BC Wildlife Federation
- BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- RCMP
- Freshwater Fisheries Society
- Canadian National Railways
- Canadian Pacific Railways
- Area E Commercial Fishermen
- B.C. Federation of Drift Fishers
- Fraser Valley Regional District
- City of Chilliwack
- Habitat Conservation Foundation

- BC Parks
- Fraser River Angling Guides Association
- Peacekeepers
- Other First Nations Communities

The initiative will ensure that previous work done by others on activities in the Lower Fraser related to this issue (e.g. the Fraser Salmon Table, Peace Circle, Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, etc.) is acknowledged and leveraged. It will also collaborate with current and ongoing related initiatives being carried out by relevant organizations.

**Projected Timelines and Key Tasks:**

Timeline	Task
May 28 – June 6	<b>Individual Interviews</b> – Conduct individual interviews with representatives of each relevant interest to identify their perspectives on challenges, opportunities and proposed solutions with specific actions, responsibilities and possible commitments to implementing respective actions. Estimated cost: 5K
June 6-10	<b>Resource Document</b> – Prepare a resource document summarizing the collective perspectives on challenges, opportunities and proposed solutions for presentation at a Solutions Dialogue. This document is expected to also identify specific commitments that various organizations are prepared to make to implement respective actions. Estimated cost: 5K
June 18	<b>Solutions Dialogue Workshop</b> – Organize, conduct and facilitate a Solutions Dialogue Workshop with representatives of all relevant interests to reach agreement on specific actions, timelines, responsibilities and commitments. Estimated cost: 15K
June 19 - 27	<b>Action Plan</b> – Develop and finalize the 2014 Lower Fraser Collaborative Action Plan. Estimated cost: 5K
July 2 - 31	<b>Implementation Partner Awareness</b> – Widely distribute the 2014 Lower Fraser Action Plan to the prospective partners to ensure that respective roles, responsibilities and timelines are well understood and resourced to make sure that educational and relationship -building opportunities are realized and potential problems and conflicts are minimized. Estimated cost: 2.5K

	<p><b>Public and Angler Awareness</b> – Develop and activate a Communications Plan no later than July 15, 2014 to guide outreach messaging and activities in support of the 2014 Lower Fraser Collaborative Action Plan. In particular, the Communications Plan will address outreach to local and regional media and other opportunities to connect with prospective anglers. A supporting kit will include key messages and collateral (media release(s), brochure or briefing sheet and website/social media posts) that will assist or support partners in communicating about the initiative with the public. * Estimated cost: 5K</p> <p><i>*Note: Materials will include comments and information from reputable fisheries scientists to explain the 2014 salmon run against the historical backdrop of depressed salmon runs, and will address the need for ongoing integrated fisheries management and conservation.</i></p>
<p>Aug 1- Sept 15</p>	<p><b>Action Plan Implementation</b></p>
<p>Sept 16- Sept 30</p>	<p><b>Reporting</b> – Complete a report on the implementation of the 2014 Lower Fraser Collaborative Action Plan and distribute that report to all the respective project partners. Estimated cost: 5K</p>
<p>May 28- Sept 30</p>	<p><b>Project Management, Administration and Travel.</b> Estimated cost: 7.5K</p>

**Resource Requirements:** The projected costs for carrying out the project are estimated to be approximately \$50,000.