



**For Immediate Release: August 27, 2009**

**Formation of working group of Sports Fishers and First Nations representatives to work towards solutions for cooperation in sharing the Fraser River**

The BC Wildlife Federation is encouraged by the coming together of First Nations and Sports Fisher representatives in a sincere effort to find workable solutions for sharing the Fraser River and access to the salmon resource.

The first meeting held on Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup> in Chilliwack was instrumental in identifying that there is a genuine willingness to find workable solutions to the problems encountered on the river. Education, communication and consistent messaging have been identified as a starting point. Ernie Crey, Fisheries Advisor for the Sto:lo Tribal Council stated at the close of the meeting that he believed that there was true willingness to work together and was instrumental in initiating a second meeting.

The second meeting was held on Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup> at Chehalis and was well attended. It must not go unnoticed that Chief Willie Charlie hosted the meeting in his home community even though he had experienced conflict on the river the week before. Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director of the BC Wildlife Federation, stated that "This gesture by Chief Willie Charlie demonstrates true leadership for both First Nations and Sports Fisher communities' and is a positive example to look to and provides confirmation that this working group has been formed in the spirit of cooperation."

At the conclusion of the 2 hour meeting an action plan was agreed upon prompting the formation of a smaller working group focusing on solution generation and recommendations to bring to the larger group which will meet again in Mission on September 24<sup>th</sup>. Some of the comments by attendees were: "The BC Federation of Drift Fishers view the creation of a working group, to review the Fraser River salmon fishing conflict, as a very positive step. The Federation and other interest groups are committed to finding practical and permanent solutions to past and present confrontations between First Nations and Sport Fishers," said Rod Clapton. Chief Willie Charlie said, "What we are doing is not working, we need to start somehow to build bridges and this will take time - right now we talk about fish but we could also be talking about stewardship and conservation."

Rod Wiebe, Vice President of the BC Wildlife Federation states, "We are very encouraged that a ban on sports fishermen from the Fraser River is no longer being suggested as a solution to the conflict but working out arrangements for sharing the river is."

Ken Malloway, Tzeachten Representative and BCWF Member stated, "We need to be willing to sort this out, to come in with open minds, to have a fresh start and don't hold anything against each other." Vic Carrero President of the Fraser Valley Guides stated that "We need to come to an understanding and get along; this is not a new problem. Cooperation, understanding and compromise will result in a new fishery."

Cpl. Chris Gosselin with the UFVRD First Nations Policing Unit of the RCMP suggests that he is committed to supporting the group in whatever role is required as there is no doubt there are problems on all sides and the RCMP can offer 'top' negotiators to provide training. Ed George, BCWF President, Region 2 responded with an invitation for Cpl. Gosselin to attend the Regions' AGM in November to speak to the region members. Dave Barrett, Chairman of the Fraser River Salmon Table Society, offered his services and an objective point of view and spoke of a new beginning and new future.

Ernie Crey further provided insights, "These are simple concepts but there will be hard work." James Leon, Fish & Wildlife Band Councillor for the Chehalis Indian Band explained, "Education is important as our fisheries are evolving."

The value of a collaborative approach was recognized through these meetings. The bringing together of representatives from different groups but with similar interests is a positive step towards finding a mutually beneficial solution to sharing the salmon resource of the Fraser River.

**In Attendance:**

Ernie Crey, Fisheries Advisor, Sto:lo Tribal Council

Ken Malloway, Tzeachten Representative and BCWF Member

Chief Willie Charlie, CEO/Aboriginal Rights & Title, Chehalis Indian Band

Kim Charlie, Fisheries Coordinator, Chehalis Indian Band

James Leon, Fish & Wildlife Band Councillor, Chehalis Indian Band

Fran Douglas, Senior Research Assistant, Chehalis Indian Band

Ed George, Regional 2 President, BC Wildlife Federation

Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director, BC Wildlife Federation

Rodney Wiebe, Vice President, BC Wildlife Federation

Andrew Stegemann, Pacific Salmon Foundation

Dave Barrett, Chairman, Fraser River Salmon Table Society

Vic Carrero, President, Fraser Valley Angling Guide Association

Rod Clapton, President, BC Federation of Drift Fishers

Cpl. Chris Gosselin, UFVRD First Nations Policing Unit, RCMP

Robert Ryers, Vice President, Fraser Valley Angling Guides Association Fishing Guides

Frank Kwak, President, Fraser Valley Salmon Society, Treasurer of Fraser River Salmon Table, BCWF Fisheries committee member

-30-

For further information contact Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director of the BCWF at 604-291-9990 extension 230 or [click to email us](#).

**The BCWF is a province-wide voluntary conservation organization representing over 35,000 British Columbian members whose aims are to protect, enhance and promote the wise use of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.**

**The B.C. Wildlife Federation was incorporated under the B.C. Societies Act in 1951 and it became a registered charity in 1969. The Federation is British Columbia's largest and oldest conservation organization.**