

“Sharing the River”

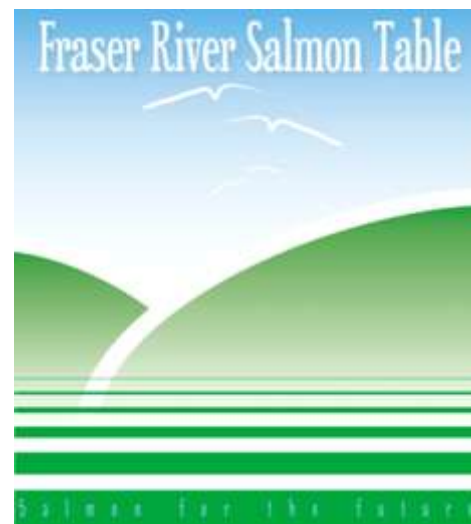
A Rolling Dialogue among Sport Fishing Interests and First Nations in the Lower Fraser River

September 3, 2009: 2-5 PM

Ramada Plaza Hotel, Abbotsford

Facilitated by the Fraser River Salmon Table

Draft # 1. September 10, 2009



Attendance

Dave Barrett, Fraser River Salmon Table President – facilitating
Dave Moore, Fraser River Salmon Table Executive Director – notes
Frank Kwak, Fraser River Salmon Table Sport Fishing File Manager¹

Ed George, BC Wildlife Federation

Robert Reyerse, Fraser Valley Angling Guides Association

Rod Clapton, BC Federation of Driftfishers

Chief Willie Charlie, Chehalis Indian Band

Regrets – Ernie Crey

Background

This is the third meeting in a rolling dialogue initiated late in the summer of 2009 by sport fishing representatives and First Nations for the purpose of finding workable solutions to share the river and access the salmon resource. The most recent impetus for this dialogue arose from recent conflicts on the Fraser River between the fisheries near Chilliwack, however participants acknowledged that this is not a new problem and there is a need to work out ways to share the river. The leadership of organized sport fishers and First Nations is a critical step in the formation of this working group to find solutions, and the parties have expressed the long term willingness to work together in the spirit of cooperation.

Dave Barrett offered the Fraser River Salmon Table’s services to organize and facilitate the dialogue on behalf of the group. An action plan had been adopted and assigned to this smaller

¹ The Fraser River Salmon Table Society (FRST) was organized in 2006 by interests in the fishery from First Nations, commercial, sport fishing and conservation groups who are looking for a more effective engagement in management. By its 2008 Constitution the FRST is not a representative organization, but a facilitating body. File Managers have been assigned as focal points for ensuring that representation from each interest is informed and involved in management developments that affect them.

working group tasked with outlining possible solutions, and making recommendations to the larger working group forum on September 24. An interim meeting of the smaller working group is scheduled to review the outcomes of today’s dialogue and to make recommendations as required.

Common Purpose and Intent

Participants began by emphasizing that the purpose of this meeting of a smaller working group to the broader forum is to focus on solutions to the conflicts between sports and First Nations fisheries triggered by recent events on the river. However, the group acknowledged that longer-term outcomes should embrace the shared commitment to conservation, enhancement/stewardship, and sustainable fisheries, the respect for each other and the distinctive fishing cultures, that both fisheries have a legal basis (if not a right) for existing, and look towards a formal agreement beyond just a protocol (MOU/accord?) to reflect common understandings down the road.

Participants all emphasized the need for more First Nations involvement if this process was to succeed. Those present from the sport fishing community felt comfortable that the sport fishery was being adequately represented.

The issues identified in this dialogue are generated upon reflection of circumstances in the lower Fraser adjacent to the lower mainland, largely between Mission and Rosedale Bridge – the “Heart of the Fraser”. However, the participants acknowledged the relevance of the issues and outcomes to the rest of the Fraser River and a broader set of interests. This work should eventually lead to broad-based education and consensus building.

The Harrison River “Demonstration” fishery project

Chehalis identified the relevance of this dialogue to the direction their negotiations with DFO were leading in the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative. The “Demonstration “ fishery project is an economic opportunities experiment initiated in 2006 involving Chehalis and Scowlitz and is meant to explore ways of building sustainable viable economic fisheries of the future. It includes direct community designation controls, management of shared allocation, and enhanced traceability systems. The impending transfer of commercial salmon licenses to support their Harrison River fisheries will require some form of arrangements with sports fisheries that will protect their investment in license transfers from being eroded by a growing sport fishery in-river. It was suggested that perhaps dedicating some of these fish to community-based guiding may be part of the economic opportunities considered. The Chehalis River salmon angling trail recently constructed by the Band with the BC Federation of Driftfishers was discussed by way of example of the Bands willingness to work together.

Some “hot button” Issues identified in discussion (no priority assigned/not necessarily exhaustive)

- More effective monitoring and enforcement is considered necessary to account for unregulated catches in both fisheries (no magnitude or blame intended)
- The methodology used in monitoring the sport catch and assessing release mortality is considered partially responsible for eroding trust in catch accounting
- Growth of both fisheries in recent years has led to crowding and conflict between and within each fishery
- There have been reports of “chasing” and purposeful intimidation (random and specific sites)
- Some fishers from both sides are accused of interfering with each other’s fishery – some practices are perhaps being miss-interpreted as interference (i.e. casting at passing drift-nets could be anglers not familiar with the extent of the net bunt, and some drifting over angling areas may be because long nets cannot be easily turned once a drift has commenced)
- In some cases it appears that First Nations and sport anglers in the heat of the fishery do not know how to communicate to avoid each other’s gear
- There is a lack of boat launch/landing sites
- There is a need for more enhancement and stewardship
- DFO is not effectively managing the fishery
- Confusion between rights and priorities in the fishery
- Both First Nations and sport fishers have expressed that they are intimidated by aggregations of other fishers – some First Nations have been observed aggregating in other sites, compounding the crowding problem, and increasing the likelihood of conflict
- There are no agreements with some First Nations – sport fishers are confused and concerned when they see unregulated and apparently unmonitored fishing
- Unmonitored landing sites are considered to be a monitoring problem in both fisheries
- Unregulated First Nations night fishing is perceived as a weakness in the monitoring problem
- The sport fishing economic benefits are not always seen to benefit the community as a whole
- Poor understanding of each other’s fishing cultures is common place and leads to conflict

Generating ideas for solutions – a starting place

Key Issues	Ideas	Summary Discussion	Ranking²
Monitoring and Enforcement	Better designation controls and mandatory landing	May have utility for both fisheries. Concern about limiting access. Enhance boat launch, camping and parking.	M
	Joint monitoring	Piloted with some success in 1990’s. DFO discontinued.	H
	Sport catch enumeration	Continue C&R studies. Consider alternative monitoring model	M
Crowding	First Nations allowed to fish at night time	Preferred by many FN’s, but some enforcement issues (DFO) and safety issues (need younger people trained)	H
	Site designations for one or other fishery	Often (not always) share priority bars and fishing sites, though angling more flexible. Good model for some areas/not others	M
	Set nets instead of drift-nets	Limited set net sites, seals stealing catch, higher drift-net catch	L
	Limit drift nets to mid river	The best success for both fisheries is along river margins	L
	Alternating sides	May isolate some First Nations from key fishing areas. May work in some areas. Tough to regulate river-center.	L
	Alternating days or week-ends (various models)	May work with some First Nations. Would severely impede guided fishery. Angling public have adapted in other areas. Weekends reserved for FSC	L
Conflict	Respectful etiquette for fisheries should be developed	Parties need to define appropriate communications protocol for fishers when gear/effort intersect (joint video “how to”)	H
	Create a buffer Zone	Both fisheries need to taught how to avoid conflict by staying a respectful distance	H
Education	Map high use areas	Rank site use. Include at landing kiosks, internet etc.	H
	Messaging and policy conflicts	Continue dialogue/ attend each other’s meetings. Kiosk at outdoor show. Joint press releases. Work together on etiquette	H
	Video/code of conduct development	See etiquette – the exercise of creating a video on codes of conduct will engage joint-exercise without fishing pressure	H
	Publish timing of openings	Available on Internet – need kiosks at landing sites	H
Economics	Train native guides	Some limited capacity now – mutual benefit	M
Stewardship	Joint projects	Projects like Chehalis trail, beaver dam control, habitat	H

² High (H), Medium (M), Low (L)

Forward

Participants agreed that the discussion about solutions was fruitful and were eager to review options further before advancing recommendations to the larger working group on September 24. Chief Willie Charlie emphasized that he could only represent Chehalis and that protocols with each First Nation (or in some cases groups of first Nations) would be required to implement solutions. Participants reaffirmed the priority for greater First Nations involvement in the next meeting.

Although it was clear that there was no single solution to the conflict between fisheries, it was understood that the options discussed may form the basis of a "tool box" that could provide for broad education, codes of conduct/etiquette, and local protocols that could diffuse potential for conflict and in some cases enhance the quality of the fishery (i.e. through better management, enhanced boat launches, camping and parking, and joint economic opportunities in native guiding, etc.). What could be accomplished with each protocol would largely depend upon the geography and distinct First Nations rights issues around each of the popular fishing sites and the distinctiveness to the sport fishery (i.e. there are only a limited number of walk-in fishing sites for sports fishers).

The Fraser River Salmon Table agreed to provide summary meeting notes by Thursday September 10 and to arrange meeting rooms and coordinate meetings for September 15 and 24. The participants agreed to review notes in preparation for the next smaller group meeting on September 15, and to work to generate recommendations to the larger working group scheduled to meet on September 24.

Next Meeting

Since the Abbotsford Ramada Hotel is fully booked for conferences on these two meeting dates, a board room has been booked for the next 2 scheduled meetings at the Chilliwack Rainbow Country Inn. Both meetings are scheduled from 2- 5PM each day.

For comment on the meeting notes:

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