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February 23, 2023

Fraser Salmon Management Board Update

Fraser Salmon Management Board (FSMB) is pleased to provide the following update on its work towards implementation of the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement (FSCMA).

- [More info: FSMB](#)
- [More info: FSCMA](#)

Fraser Sockeye

Last August, the [FSMB agreed on an in-season management approach](#) for considering increased Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) sockeye opportunities for Fraser and marine approach First Nations, given the strong Fraser sockeye run size forecast. Poor returns and environmental factors in recent years have severely limited all Fraser sockeye fisheries, including rights-based indigenous harvest, which has first priority after conservation needs are met.

While the August 2 decision was a landmark first step for the new FSMB, late timing of this decision and in season challenges resulted in limited opportunities for additional in-season harvest that fell short of the intent. The [FSMB's post-season review](#) has however provided valuable lessons on both process and management approaches to inform future planning.

With a poor outlook for Fraser Sockeye in 2023, management is expected to focus on conservation and precautionary management for all fisheries. This will call for difficult decisions on how to share harvests that are likely to be insufficient to meet rights-based FSC fishery allocations.

FSMB has heard clearly that a new protocol to guide sharing of Fraser sockeye amongst rights-based fisheries in low-abundance years would require extensive time and additional resources for engagement, given the difficult questions raised for indigenous communities. FSMB has identified work related to the management of Fraser Sockeye, including discussions related to FSC access and allocation including sharing as priority work plan topics, so the Board will continue to explore potential solutions, both for the 2023 fishery planning and for the longer-term.

Fraser Chinook

Fraser River Chinook Management, along with recovery and rebuilding of depressed Fraser Chinook populations, are important FSMB work plan priorities. On Feb. 10, 2023, the FSMB passed an enabling motion reflecting a consensus Board decision to focus its collaborative planning for 2023 fisheries on guidance for managing the Fraser Chinook Spring 4₂, Spring 5₂ and Summer 5₂ Management Units. (*See the full recommendation below*).

Fraser River stream-type Chinook (Including Spring 4₂, Spring 5₂ and Summer 5₂) have been identified as stocks of concern with a management objective to manage Canadian fisheries in a highly precautionary manner to allow as many fish to pass through to the spawning grounds as possible. Under current management approaches, incidental mortalities may occur in test fisheries, First Nation FSC (Food, Social and Ceremonial) fisheries, or as release or incidental mortalities in marine or in-river recreational or commercial fisheries.

Last year, the FSMB recommended adding a placeholder in the 2022/23 Salmon IFMP to review fishery management measures for Fraser Chinook in the fall/winter of 2022/2023 based on fishery mortality estimates for these stocks for the 2019 to 2021 period. As a result, FSMB's Joint Technical Committee (JTC), with the assistance of DFO and other indigenous technical staff, has worked to review DFO's fishery planning and evaluation tools and their outputs, including the 2021 Fraser Chinook fishery mortalities.

Technical review of the Fishery Mortality Index (or FMI, which combines Fraser run reconstruction plus marine catch/stock composition data) indicates that since more precautionary management measures were introduced in 2019, fishery mortalities for earlier-timed Fraser Spring 4₂ and Spring 5₂ Chinook were reduced to approximately 5% on average for the 2019-2021 period. However, over that timeframe the average FMI for Summer 5₂ Chinook was approximately 15%, likely due to later return timing overlaps with the more abundant Summer 4₁ Chinook that were the primary target of Chinook fisheries during this time period.

Despite improved spawner abundance seen in 2022, FSMB remains concerned about uncertain future productivity of these populations, low spawner abundance in the parental generation, and potential in-river migration impacts for Spring 5₂ and Summer 5₂ Chinook due to the Big Bar landslide.

First Nations also remain concerned that FSC needs are not being met and the current distribution of allowed mortalities does not respect priority for First Nations.

Contacts:

For further information or questions, please contact:

Fraser Salmon Management Council: Greg Witzky, Executive Director
executivedirector@frasersalmon.ca

Fisheries and Oceans Canada: Matthew Parslow, Senior Implementation Advisor (FSCMA) –
matthew.parslow@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Fraser Salmon Management Board MOTION (Approved by consensus Feb 10, 2023):

FSMB by consensus recommends that a precautionary management approach be in place for Spring 4₂ and Spring 5₂ Chinook and that DFO and the FSMC, through the FSMB work to identify and recommend additional fishery management measures for 2023 to further reduce fishery mortalities on Summer 5₂ Chinook, as estimated by DFO's Fishery Mortality Index (FMI), from approximately 15% towards 10%, in a manner that respects priority access for First Nations food, social and ceremonial fisheries after conservation measures; and

That the FSMC and DFO continue to work through FSMB/JTC on pre-season planning and technical analysis, and both parties consult with indigenous interests and/or stakeholders as appropriate and report back to the FSMB, so that the FSMB can seek consensus on the recommended reductions in 2023/2024.