

NOTE: <https://frasersalmon.ca/2024-forums/>

Participants

IN PERSON

Marcel Shepert, Facilitator/Forum Chair

Greg Witzky, FSMC

Sharmayne Page, FSMC

Kristin Hrapchak, FSMC

Mike Staley, FSMC/JTC CO-Chair

Aidan Fisher, LFFA, JTC

Marc Labelle, JTC

Shamus Curtis, UFFCA, JTC

Nicole Frederickson, IMAWG, JTC

Pat Matthew, FSMC FSMB

Tina Donald, FSMC MT

Victor Isaac, Namgis, FSMC MT

Pete Erickson, FSMC MT

Jessica Moffatt, IMAWG

Sonora Thompson, IMAWG

Kim Charlie, Sts'ailes

Sally Hope, Seabird

Janson Wong, FNFC

Drew McDonald, FNFC

Noah Cussin-Bordo, FNFC

Don Sam, NNTC

Stephanie, Nazko

Tristan, Nazko

Mike Campbell

Nikia Hanna

Kevin Duncan

Bonnie Adolf, St'at'imc

Rebecca Riley, St'at'imc

Chad Fuller, ONA

Harold Amos, IMAWG

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Kyle Lewis, IMAWG

Candace Picco, Haoom

Tony Malloway, Tzeachten

Matt Andrews, Namgis

Dawn Steele, Notes

ONLINE

Ken Malloway, FSMC FSMB

Tony Roberts Jr, FSMC FSMB

Darren Haskell, FSMC MT

Tracy Wimbush, Shackan, FSMC MT

Les Antone, FSMC MT

Pete Nicklin, TNG

Don Simpson, LFE-LP

Andrew Maybury

Brian Assu

Howie Wright, HFS

Shane John, Chawathil

Michelle Edwards, St'at'imc

Cait Cameron, St'at'imc

Richard Bailey, Nicola FN

Leah Collins, Coldwater

Ray Silvey

Rod Peters, Seabird

Murray Ned, LFFA

Dominic Hope, Yale

Nic Coutu, WLFN

Janice Billy, (Day 2)

Kevin Cook, Semiahmoo (Day 2)

Nick Chowdhury (Day 2)

DFO (In Person)

Linda Stevens

Sheldon Evers

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Zayna Khan

Brandon Wood

Lindsay Begemann

Brittany Jenewein, JTC Co-Chair

Mike Hawkshaw

Jeff Grout, FSMB

Jeff Radford

Adam Keizer (Day 2)

DFO (Online)

Al Magnan, FSMB

Linda Higgins, FSMB

Amy Wakelin

Colin Schwindt

Christine Bukta

Dylan Couture

Heather Braun

Jacob Omajali

Ge Li

Krista Gooderham

Max Veilleux, JTC

Mikaela Bacon

Sukriti Khanna

Teagan Wardrop

Thomas Powell

Rob Martin

Owen Pankratz

Jeff Reader

Gabriele Nandal

Lita Gomez

Patricia House

Steven Groves (Day 2)

Duncan Stephen, FSMB (Day 2)

Dale Michie (Day 2)

Andrea Haas (Day 2)

Day 1/Tier 2 Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Marcel welcomed DFO reps, led introductions and reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives.

Update: 2023 What We Heard

Al Magnan, DFO FSMB

Presentation highlights included:

- DFO introduced “What We Heard” to summarize/confirm key Forum feedback in 2023.
- Agreed that FSMB will provide joint What We Heard summaries in 2024 and going forward, and lead the response to questions, working with the Forum Planning Committee to plan agendas that respond to issues and concerns raised.
- Forum planners will also use an Excel action item tracker, which will be updated and shared after every Forum. The tracker will include a “back eddy” to keep track of issues that FSMB/DFO can’t immediately address.
- Summary of key themes from 2023 What We Heard: managing in a changing environment, indigenous engagement in fisheries management (e.g. UNDRIP action plan), FSC priority access and process questions.
- Review of 2023 What We Heard slides and specific issues raised.

Discussion

- Proposed that the word “issue” not be used to describe topics/priorities raised by nations.
- Q/A: Intent is that What we Heard will be a joint responsibility of DFO and FSMB, recognizing FSMB’s transitional management role.
- The presentation was an updated version of the one shared with the agenda package. It should include deadlines, more specifics on the response to matters raised. How will we ensure “parking lot” issues are eventually addressed? The PPT references FSC not aligning with nations’ expectations — should be clear that it’s not aligned with court rulings. DFO moved forward with MSFs despite not having the nations’ free prior and informed consent — so DFO is not honouring its UNDRIP commitments.
 - DFO: Agree we can better identify deadlines going forward. Apologies for wording not being legally precise — the intent was to capture/summarize the discussion. Back Eddy is intended to capture issues outside Forum scope — we can look at how best to re-direct those.
- Support the What We Heard effort, but important to demonstrate next steps and what’s being done to move forward on UNDRIP, address legal/allocation questions.
- The courts said that if our food needs are not being met, no one should be fishing in front of us, but that’s been the reality in recent years, with all kinds of fishing occurring in front of us, including new MSFs, with significant release mortalities. We’ve been calling for restoration of

a fourth Forum and Visions conference — e.g. another Forum in June/July focussing on exchanging info on rebuilding, etc.

- Who decides what's out of scope?
 - Forum Planning Committee reviews topics — scope is based on Forum ToRs.

Forum Renewal Update

Marc LaBrie, West Coast Aquatic

Presentation summarized highlights of WCA's findings and report advising on Forum Renewal:

- Overview of the WCA report audience and content.
- Need for Forum Renewal in the new FSCMA context.
- WCA was contracted to conduct interviews, informal discussions, review documents and observe the 2023 Forum process.
- Recommendation highlights:
 - Improve clarity re Forum role in fishery management under FSCMA and re-align with new FSMC/B process; strengthen FSMC's regional processes and link those to Forum; explore how Forum can support a more collaborative IFMP.
 - Adapting Forum process in this evolving context; more focus on "how" to build trust.
 - Divergent views/suggestions on what the Forum should be.
 - Importance of engaging participants in agenda setting, showing how they were heard, demonstrating value in their participation.
 - Importance of structured communication loops, Forum role in addressing IFMP process concerns; capacity needed for effective process and communications.
 - Potentially expand Forum to engage other sectors, Province of BC.
 - JTWG recommendations: realign JTWG role, strengthen link to Forum Planning, FSMC and tighten JTWG process.
- WCA report has been shared — FSMC to re-distribute to Forum participants. **ACTION**
- Next steps: Forum Planning Committee to determine next steps, including potentially a workshop to discuss proposed reforms.

Discussion

- Important to remember that Forum is not a mandated process (unlike FSMC, which requires Band Council resolutions to formalize membership). Some proposed changes would require a mandated process that permits Forum to make decisions.
 - Didn't hear specific advice to make Forum a decision making process — it was more about ensuring a clear flow of communication for Forum outputs.

2023 Post-season Review: Fraser Sockeye & Pink

Mike Hawkshaw, DFO

FSMC/DFO Fraser/Approach Salmon Fisheries Forum

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Presentation summarized 2023 season and outcomes — highlights included:

- Fraser Panel governance changes: Canada introduced a First Nations Co-Chair to strengthen focus on indigenous perspectives.
- Fraser sockeye time series showing shifting productivity.
- Pre-season forecast — Fraser Sockeye (no harvestable surplus expected) and Pinks.
- 2024 environmental conditions: very low flows.
- Comparison for key stocks: pre-season forecast (p50) vs end-of-season run size estimate.
- No directed 2023 fisheries in Fraser Panel waters; some ESSR/bycatch permitted in non-Panel waters.
- Limited interest in Pink fisheries (record low prices).
- Preliminary post-season estimate of retained catch.
- Post-season run timing (early returns challenged protection of co-migrating stocks).
- Post season run size estimates.
- Fraser Panel issues: significant Canada/US disagreement over proposed US fisheries; US concerns over Canadian FSC ESSR (Excess Surplus to Spawning Requirements) and un-sanctioned fisheries.
 - Discussion: Marcel/Ken added perspectives re the disputes over US tribes fishing for pinks using sockeye mesh. Further discussion planned in February.
 - US/Canadian dispute: Canadian position is that US did not do enough to avoid sockeye impacts in their pink fishery, and that they prioritized domestic fishery objectives over spawning escapement goals.
 - PSC Secretariat proposed clearer definition of “small but acceptable” bycatch.
 - US requested more info on Canada’s ESSR fishery framework.
- Post-season meeting summary: preliminary escapement below target for Fraser Sockeye/above target for Pinks.

Discussion

- 2023 was a very confusing season — commercial buyers weren’t aware the Pink fishery would be opening. Better DFO planning needed.
- Should include comparison of forecast, returns and escapement. Management is not consistent with priority if Canada caught 40K, while only a small proportion of that went to FSC and our food needs were not met. What are the parameters for ESSR fisheries? What other stocks are impacted? We need to recognize the ecosystem values of returning Pinks even if we don’t fish them. Need to look at spawning requirements, not just escapement targets. Need to protect Summer 41s, which are being hit hard.
 - DFO: There were no Pink ESSR fisheries this year. The ESSRs were targeting abundant Sockeye stocks that exceeded their MSY targets (Chilko, Chilliwack and Nadina).

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- Request clarification of how DFO approves Sockeye directed fisheries using LAER (Low Abundance Exploitation Rate)/ESSR frameworks. Concern about denial of access for our FSC dry rack fisheries, despite very modest impacts.
 - DFO: A couple fisheries targeting Late Stuart Sockeye were approved for nations that can't access any other stocks, even though they're not meeting MSY targets.
 - We're looking for flexibility for fisheries opportunities instead of no retention being permitted because they were in LAER status.
- Was ESSR harvest included in the number shown for total catch relative to the LAER cap?
 - DFO: ESSR fisheries and FIMs (Fishery Incidental Mortality) are not included in PSC (Pacific Salmon Commission) estimates of formally reported exploitation rates (ERs), as per language and agreement in the PST (Pacific Salmon Treaty) and Fraser Panel. However, the PSC and DFO often also report Total ER (other terms are sometimes used as well) that will include estimates of ESSR catch and FIMs.
 - Not comfortable with how these rights-based fisheries are characterized (ESSR, LAER). "Excess" suggests excessive amounts when these are modest, selective fisheries in a context of FSC food needs not being met.
 - DFO: Clarify that these are not large fisheries.
- Not accurate to state that there was little FN interest in Pink fisheries, given there are a number of barriers to participation.
- The TNG fishery in 2023 was a rights-based Sockeye and Chinook fishery, based on a leadership-approved pre-season plan, extensive planning, technical, low impact, selective fishery, with responsible oversight and real-time data/ monitoring to ensure it operated responsibly. TNG does not support the labelling of these fisheries as ESSR, unsanctioned or "other." TNG thanks DFO for their support and in-season communication during a difficult time, and their participation in a TNG-hosted tour to observe the fishery in progress. Additionally, note that it's challenging to uphold TNG rights while working within the PST framework.
- Many factors work against our being able to seize opportunities for fisheries where possible without affecting conservation. DFO needs to improve in-season communication on terminal fisheries to counter misinformation. As improved numbers start to permit terminal fisheries, DFO should consider risk-based approach to permit fisheries in marine approach areas.
- Q/A: DFO: The MSY targets were updated in a 2018 paper. Agree re challenges around PST and supporting flexibility for rights-based fisheries.
 - Nations in the Lower Fraser could have had an economic opportunity on Pinks but DFO's instrument (Comprehensive Fisheries Agreement) requires 20 of 23 Nations to sign the agreement AND compromise sockeye and chum FSC access, which makes it a non starter.
 - The Chilliwack ESSR got ~100 fish for a run that came back at 20,000 vs 2,000 target.

2023 Fraser Chinook, Coho and Chum

Brittany Jenewein, DFO

DFO presentation highlights included:

- Fraser Chinook management objectives; stock assessment overview.
 - Escapement relative to targets, long-term averages for five Fraser Chinook MUs.
 - Exceptionally high return estimates for Summer 41s (subject to further investigation).
- Fraser River coho: Interior Fraser River (IFR) Coho management, status, historical abundance/Exploitation Rate. Escapement target met for 3 years, but smolt to adult survival remains below target, so IFR coho will remain in “Low” status for 2024 and coming years.
- Fraser Chum MU managed based on in-season info from Albion test fishery. Post-season enumeration still underway. Time series summarizing returns to 2022.
- 2023 test fishery summary.
- 2023 Fraser River fisheries: First Nations fishery management objectives and management actions; summary of FN catch.
- 2023 recreational fishery management; Fraser catch estimates (Lower Fraser catch estimates not yet available).
- 2023 Commercial fishery overview. No licensed chum fisheries.
- Updated Chinook FMI results including 2022.
 - Exploitation rate analysis for MUs with CWT (Coded Wire Tag) indicator stocks.
 - Note re significant uncertainties around FMI estimates — take home point is that fishery mortalities have been significantly reduced relative to the base period since measures were introduced in 2019.

Discussion

- Why doesn't DFO consider moving test fisheries (to address habituated seals).
 - DFO: We avoid moving the test fishery location to ensure consistency with standardized methodology. We do other test fisheries to validate the outcomes. We have not explored using shallow seine in detail. If we were to change it would require several years of overlap.
- Why was the Johnston Strait fishery open to rec fishery at full limits (4/day), despite DFO knowing they wouldn't meet Chum escapement targets? Commercial is supposed to have priority but we weren't allowed to go. They also permitted a derby to go ahead.
 - DFO: The main reason is that the rec fishery is open unless closed under IFMP rules. It was shut when it was clear that escapement goals would not be met. The referenced derby was changed to coho-directed.
 - It's not acceptable that DFO continues to permit rec fishing to be open until closed, while we are closed until open.
 - DFO: We are discussing these concerns and changes to align management.
- **ACTION:** DFO to provide rec Chum harvest in Johnston Strait.

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- Request that DFO provide marine rec catch (not just Fraser River) for such presentations as this is Fraser/Approach Fisheries Forum. **ACTION**
- If rec anglers can fish for coho, why don't First Nations also have opportunities for MSFs? We haven't been able to fish for coho for 40 years.
 - DFO: Marine fisheries are generally planned to avoid IFR coho. In-river coho fisheries, especially above Hells Gate, would target IFR coho. DFO is exploring whether to raise the mortality cap to permit more fisheries.
 - Don't support that. We don't want to raise mortality on stocks that remain depressed. Why are those coho clipped?
 - DFO: We clip those fish to understand and monitor ocean survival. We are seeing more escapement so open to discussing opportunities.

Adjourned: 4:30 pm

Day 2, Tier 2 Welcome/Day 1 Recap

Marcel welcomed everyone, reviewed the draft agenda and highlights from Day 1, starting with the wisdom of the young Kwantlen hosts who opened the meeting: they talked about working as one, thinking with our hearts and spirits, the wisdom of the elders and the importance of thinking outside the box for solutions to protect the gift of salmon for future generations. Other Day 1 highlights:

- Tier 1 report from JTWG noting the importance of reforming management frameworks designed for high abundance, ensuring learning opportunities to get new technical reps up to speed, and many questions about reliability/confidence levels in data and methods used to plan rec fisheries (especially new MSFs) and assess their impacts.
- Several references to the importance of using appropriate language and providing appropriate context in post-season reporting.
- Updated What We Heard approach, new FSMB role, how to deal with "back eddy" topics.
- Forum Renewal report presentation and key recommendations, including importance of better aligning the Forum with the new FSCMA processes and demonstrating value for participants; feedback emphasizing the limitations of a non-mandated process.
- Post season reports: feedback included questions about sockeye access, concerns about rec chum being open until closed and discussion on rec retention of clipped coho.

2024 Pre-season Planning & Salmon IFMP Priorities

Adam Keizer, DFO

Presentation highlights:

- Much of this presentation was already shared in other post-season sessions. Detailed PPT (see agenda package) outlines/seeks feedback on 2024 planning priorities & considerations.
- 2024 IFMP timelines: clarified that new fishery proposals for 2024/25 can be submitted after the Jan 26 deadline (which is for inclusion in the draft IFMP).

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- 2023 Chinook measures: recent measures for commercial and rec fisheries to protect Fraser Chinook stocks of concern and make more fish available for Fraser/Approach FSC fisheries.
 - FMI results indicate reduced fishery impacts due to measures in place since 2019. In 2023, FSMB could not agree on new measures to protect Chinook Summer 52s, but DFO unilaterally implemented further measures to reduce impacts on that MU.
 - Summary of fishery evaluation data/analyses for Fraser Chinook.
 - Chinook PST indicator stocks with defined treaty obligations.
 - Estimated 2023 Fraser Chinook escapement summary.
 - Updated FMI analysis summary.
- Southern BC Chinook: 2024 management objectives: FSMB considering approach for Summer 52 Chinook.
 - Initial planning considerations: Summer 52s, Harrison, key longer-term priorities for management.

Discussion

- Request for more on (??) discussion paper. 2024 is the first year of returns from Big Bar brood impacts. The measures do appear to be reducing mortalities, which is encouraging, and we have seen positive escapement trends in Upper Fraser.
 - DFO: DFO is working on the new FSAR (Fisheries Science Advice Report, the new national template for describing conservation framework and targets for identified at risk stocks under new legislated “Fish Stock Provisions” introduced in the 2019 update to the Fisheries Act). There will be interesting discussion on how to apply these to salmon MUs with multiple CUs (Conservation Units). The 2019 Big Bar slide may impact Upper Fraser stocks returning in 2024. We already have severe FSC restrictions (3 fish/band) in place, so need to consider this context.
- If rec anglers are releasing 100,000+ Chinook, that’s more than 20,000 fish killed. Stollo get 2 Chinook each total for FSC, while rec anglers get 2/day. Catch data show rec anglers in BC Interior caught more than all the interior nations together. Anglers can catch and release 30 fish per day under current measures, which is hugely wasteful.
 - DFO: We are starting to look at how to operationalize priority access for Chinook. For Sockeye, there are no directed commercial/rec fisheries if there is no TAC. For Chinook, it’s more complicated, because rec fisheries are catching and releasing large numbers in marine fisheries that target US hatchery fish, with maybe some impacts on Fraser stocks. We are trying to avoid Fraser fish in planning those fisheries but the question is how much is low enough. We do include release mortalities for rec in the FMI estimates.
 - Still, a non-retention fishery that kills 20% of non-target stocks doesn’t make sense.
 - Proposed solution that anglers be required to stop fishing after catching their limit.
- We need to look more closely at the anomalous/positive Chinook Summer 41 returns to understand what is going on before assuming it’s all good.

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- Echo need for caution vs increasing harvest for 2024, as populations are still below SMSY and long term abundance.
- The current IFMP goes to May 31 and includes MSFs to start May 1. Propose reviewing those with high sub-legal encounters or high ratios of unclipped fish to determine if they should proceed. **ACTION**
 - DFO: Welcome Forum feedback on whether there is interest in increasing access for FSC in 2024. Noted concerns about MSFs.
 - Q/A: No new MSF's expected for the 2023/24 IFMP (current period) but there may be some for Summer 2024/Spring 2025.
- FSC priority access is not being respected. MSFs are occurring at times when FSC is closed, with some impacts on Fraser stocks of concern. Want stock composition results for 2022 at the next Forum. **ACTION**
 - DFO: Acknowledge that this is a significant issue, but add that we do have significant restrictions on rec fisheries, Approving MSFs was a decision by the minister, but staff are working to ensure it's fully informed. It's also being discussed as part of the SAP (Salmon Allocation Policy) review.
- Caution that the estimated reduction in FMI for one year is one data point with high uncertainty so not enough to draw conclusions about potential new Chinook opportunities.
- FN want to be involved in the FSAR work. **ACTION**
- Why is there no Chinook commercial allocation/opening in Gulf of Georgia, while recreational anglers have unlimited access?
 - DFO: There has been no commercial opportunity for chinook in Strait of Georgia for a long time, in line with the SAP.
- The WCVI 5-nations are planning a 2024 fishery for sale as well as FSC, with 100% dockside monitoring. We are interested in helping with sampling for stock ID and working with others on how to respect priority if restrictions are relaxed.
- Re steelhead, Lower Fraser FSC only caught 2 steelhead in 2023 but no GSI is being done so we don't know whether they are LF or IFR populations. Propose including the Province to discuss steelhead at a future meeting. **ACTION**

Presentation, continued:

- IFR Steelhead status and 2024 planning: DFO remains committed to the joint steelhead action plan.
- 2023 Chum fisheries and 2024 planning: poor 2020 brood so poor returns expected and no management changes expected for 2024.
- Quantitative Fraser Sockeye forecast expected in a few weeks. Key planning issues include window closure, escapement plan, and planning for FSC in a context of low returns.
- IFR Coho management framework — status zones and related management measures; current status.
 - Southern Inside coho: Lower Fraser and SoG.

Discussion

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- Q/A: Nicole to follow with with DFO SC staff re updated DNA data results from the SoG assessment fishery. **ACTION**
- Caution that green colour coding for sockeye returns (Slide 24) is relative to forecast, not long-term or escapement benchmarks (visual is somewhat misleading).
- Q/A: Many steelhead impacts are in fisheries that DFO manages. There's been a request to invite the Province to discuss steelhead management.
- One year, DFO increased coho harvest because there was a bump in IFR coho returns and it resulted in significant negative impacts. Concern about the fishery sampling pilot permitting retention of one unmarked coho in portions of Area 13 to 15.
 - DFO: The pilot was intended to assess potential impacts and found virtually no IFR coho. Will share results as requested.
- What are DFO plans to manage pinniped impacts on salmon? Will DFO consult with nations just on FSC or on all fisheries in our territory? Re Slide 37 — that consultation doesn't currently happen so commitments to FPIC and UNDRIP are meaningless without it.
 - DFO: There are studies but no specific plan for pinniped management. Re consultation, the role of FSMB is to bring together nations to support more meaningful collective dialogue on such issues — which is not to discount direct discussions with nations. Are there specific concerns?
 - Our nation has never been consulted about sport fisheries in our territory that affect both at-risks stocks in our territory as well as Fraser stocks.

Fraser Salmon Management Board

Marcel Shepert, FSMB Independent Chair

Presentation highlights:

- Background and precursors to the 2019 FSCMA, evolution of Forum process, implementation of FSMB and FSMC.
- FSMC, DFO and FSMB organizational structures and linkages. Pending work includes clarifying links to AAROMs.
- Work plan: Details are on FSMC website. Key priorities are Chinook, sockeye, governance/process development and FSC access/allocation.
- Fishery management and decision timelines: FSCMA's Dispute Resolution clause was invoked in 2023 when DFO and FSMC could not agree on Fraser Chinook Summer 52 fishery management, requiring DFO to provide detailed rationale for their unilateral decision.
 - Moving forward, FSMB agrees on the need to establish quantifiable conservation targets for Fraser Chinook and to fund technical work required to develop such in time for the 2024/25 IFMP.
- Process development: work done in the past year to develop action tracker, establish annual planning timelines for fishery management decisions, agenda planning and document tracking, clarifying JTC role and FSMC Tier 1 process development.
- Also work to develop joint external communications protocols.

Discussion

- Appreciate JTC work on sockeye escapement options, but why isn't it a decision and how is this different than in the past? What overarching objectives and principles guide FSMB in development of those options? What happens with our IFMP feedback?
 - Options are intended to support discussion around priorities for harvest vs. conservation. What's different this year is that DFO and FSMC reps worked collaboratively to develop the options. Re the overall sockeye framework, we have to work within PST rules, but there are opportunities to explore different approaches, e.g. for terminal areas like Chilko. Our Work Plan outlines objectives that guide FSMB. FSMB will review IFMP feedback and try to reach consensus on recommended approaches for 2024/25. Input from Forum participants is welcomed on how to start initiating management reforms to address matters of concern.
- The FSCMA acknowledges that both parties have authority and mandates that they need to work within. The challenge for FSMB is to try to reach consensus within that context.
 - Discussion: The reality is it's more nuanced than saying the minister has final authority for Chinook decisions, although some IFMP decisions can be made by DFO staff locally, while others require ministerial sign off.
- On how this process can make change, at this point 76 nations have signed on to FSMC but having all the Fraser/Approach nations sign on would make our positions hard to ignore.
 - DFO: Emphasize the progress that has been made, and the potential to start implementing UNDRIP as this process develops.
- It's a challenge to advance FN priorities in a context of constant ministerial turnover.
- On FSC access and allocation, the Dispute Resolution also resulted in an FSMB commitment to start exploring new metrics/performance measures to evaluate whether fishery management is consistent with priority access rights.

Presentation: PSC Award honouring Mike Staley

Marcel reviewed Mike's long career and his many accomplishments and contributions in a formal presentation celebrating this award.

SEP Presentation

Marla Maxwell, DFO

Presentation highlights (See PPT for details):

- Overview of hatchery enhancement — what it is.
- Enhancement objectives and priorities: harvest opportunities, conservation, stock assessment. SEP production is key to Chinook and Coho PST indicator programs.
- Integrated production planning: recap of annual production planning cycle and consultation.
- SRKW prey study.
- Mass marking (MM) for hatchery genetic management; MM objectives.

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- MM does not need to be linked to rec fisheries (can be linked to genetic objectives and/or to have FSC MSFs).
- General uses of MM for hatchery management.
- Proposed pilot MM populations for hatchery genetic management: internal proposal (approval pending), based on advice from external WG.
- Future SEP production planning at Fraser Forum: Feedback sought on what info is of interest at this venue and/or at local venues.

Discussion

- Which stocks have been rebuilt through hatchery enhancement? Despite Spius hatchery production that has supported fisheries for many years, we have many populations that have not rebuilt. The presentation focussed on Chinook, but what about coho production and marking? We have not been allowed to have MSFs on marked fish in-river. I don't see First Nations priorities reflected in the slides. We already have data on these populations that is not being used, so why is SEP producing more fish to provide data? Concerned about DFO pumping out 12 million fish that will affect wild Fraser stocks of concern, as those will be in the mix and subject to significant additional release mortalities in MSFs.
 - DFO: Can discuss concerns further at the local level. Re Slide 6 describing the current process, DFO acknowledges that FN priorities are not well reflected so open to discussing how to improve that. MSFs work best in situations when there are high mark rates and gear with low release mortality, so DFO is very open to engaging on potential interest in such.
- Q/A: Agree that hatcheries are just one aspect of salmon enhancement.
- Q: Question re external partners in the MM WG and their role in fish production. What is being done to support Fraser Chinook?
 - DFO: The MM WG included many FN and external partners. Fish production by external partners needs to be approved and licensed. SEP has been very involved in conservation enhancement linked to Big Bar, in partnership with FNs and we expect to continue that work in some form.
- Q/A: Killer Whale “poop” is sampled to identify PBT signals for hatchery produced fish.
- The hatcheries shown are all on the coast and seem intended to benefit recreational fishers — hatcheries upriver would provide more benefits for First Nations, not just rec fishers.
 - DFO: We are thinking along the same lines and have been working on such a proposal with PSSSI funding.
- Q/A: Marla to share background documentation on SRKW prey production. **ACTION**
- How was advice from PSF studies included in production planning? How does DFO know whether the extra production is actually benefitting whales vs. rec anglers?
 - DFO: We can also look for CWTs to see how much was caught by rec anglers. It will take ~ 4 years to collect and analyze the data.

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- Has DFO considered less mass production to avoid issues with straying and wild interactions? Instead of just doing more MM to solve the problems, why not just reduce hatchery production for harvest?
 - DFO: Hatchery production is done in response to interest in having more fish for harvest. So if there is interest in reducing such production, that also needs to be communicated.
 - Why not reduce production and redirect resources to conservation? Who decides that? It doesn't seem like a very open process.
 - DFO: Those facilities were built and designed decades ago to mass produce fish for harvest. With the new conservation agenda, we need to explore how to reallocate resources and retrofit hatcheries to do this. Would love to engage more with this and other FN groups on how to do that.
- Suggest that is a good discussion for FSMB — i.e. how to prioritize conservation and shift the current balance.
- Q/A: Some of the proposed MM fish will have CWTs (not all) but they will have PBT (Marla to confirm) **ACTION**
 - CWTs are critical to PST assessment, so more MM without CWTs will strain existing programs that we rely on for stock assessment.
 - DFO: Acknowledge this is an issue. There are solutions, but they cost money.
- Q/A: Still to be determined whether fish being produced by Upper Fraser conservation hatcheries will be marked — DFO is working with partners.
- **ACTION:** Marla to share info on the SEP MM WG.
- It's hard to swallow that whales get priority over our food fish needs.
- ONA demonstrated how to use hatcheries successfully in restoration and the importance of an integrated approach that includes all the human interactions. We have extensive evidence that the large production hatcheries on the coast don't work, so concerned to see that SEP will be doing more of the same that didn't work in the past. It's important that FN are involved in the process of deciding how and where hatchery production is planned. If hatcheries are fundamentally about restoring sustainable wild populations, that drives everything we do and can support successful restoration. How do you accomplish rebuilding for some stocks and MSF harvest for others where those stocks are mingled on WCVI?
 - DFO: The listed stocks are identified for new MM production (not necessarily new MSFs).
- We've been doing hatchery production to offset the effects of industry, so concern about being wedged out by a new mega-hatchery in Prince George instead of building on existing FN-led hatcheries.
 - DFO: There is interest in having more capacity for assessment and conservation. There is significant need for capacity, so we expect those hatcheries will continue to contribute.

Day 3, Tier 2

Closing the Loop | What We Heard

Greg Witzky, FSMC & Robin Hawes, DFO

Presentation highlights included:

1. Forum Process:

- More clarity on back eddy, deadlines; more time for some agenda items.
- Interest in more engagement: 4th Forum, Re-Visions conference.
- Next steps for Forum Renewal, ToRs: everyone needs to support this work (joint responsibility).

Discussion

- For Forum topics like SEP, presentations should match scope of this Forum.
- Back eddy issues could be dealt with at a Visions conference.
- Value of graphics/sketch artists to support written reports.
- Questions about Forum role: if it's just info sharing, we need to advise participants where they should share advice.
 - If it's just information exchange, is that inconsistent with calls to strengthen What We Heard accountability, response to advice heard?
 - Action tracking is consistent with Information exchange/non-mandated process.
 - So separate action items from management advice in what we heard.
 - Value of an open Forum that includes signatories and non-signatories to build understanding amongst nations.
 - Forum hosts need to confirm that participants were heard. We should revisit the proposal to have FSMC meet after Forum to support mandate development.
 - Forum is a good place to exchange info — trying to reconcile all the diverse views would be unachievable.
 - FSMC co-hosts the Forum, and this is an important venue to get advice/input from both signatories and non-signatories, even if it's just high level guidance/principles, since our decisions will affect both signatories and non-signatories. So we need to design agendas to get that information.
 - I have always appreciated the information being shared and the value of having the nations gather here, as it gives me insight/understanding of the struggles/successes that other nations are facing. Thanks to FSMC for hosting these forums!
- What about FSMC hosting an early planning session for an indigenous IFMP?

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- Whether we have our own IFMP or not, we still need time and information to consult with DFO on planning for other fisheries that affect our fisheries and resources.

Presentation, continued:

- Communication: The importance of language, terminology, interest in update on UNDRIP.

Discussion

- Propose additional step of presenters sharing PPTs earlier for Forum planners to check language, appropriate focus and context.

Fraser Sockeye

- Re context, need to compare return estimates to actual spawning escapements.
- Forum is valuable for informing each other about other processes and how our fisheries affect each other. There are other processes underway (reconciliation, co-management agreements, etc) and Forum can help inform FSMC/B on Fraser stocks that co-migrate in other fisheries, e.g. Five Nations fisheries.
- May be useful to have a narrower focus on single topics for Forums or the entire annual Forum series so that we can dig more deeply into these, with FSMC as the secretariat hosting and coordinating the Forums for all nations, signatories and non signatories. Love the opportunity to share info here but reconciling advice and recommendations from diverse groups/interests is not attainable at the Forum unless we have 6 or more Forums/year. Maybe we should pick one topic such as Chinook (or MM/MSF, SEP, steelhead etc) for an entire Forum, or all Forums, and see if we can make collaborative progress. Otherwise, I would rather spend more time on Tier 1 salmon planning initiatives that at the end of the day bring more coherency to Tier 2.
- Importance of providing clarity on the principles guiding FSMB FM decisions.
- Importance of providing Sockeye opportunities, indigenous perspectives.
- DFO: This Forum provides valuable info that can shape and inform FSMB's work; e.g the Sockeye and Chinook options that we're developing this year.

Chinook

- Wording: it's not about "feeling", the concern is about honouring legal direction on Section 35 fisheries.
- Re "disagreement" re catch release, we are opposed to permitting anything other than food fisheries, especially where catch/release impacts FSC access/priority.
- Need to review /reconsider May 1 MSFs proposed under the current IFMP in light of new data, and also whether they will continue.
- JTWG wants the stock composition results from the Chinook reference fishery and also what are the MSF benchmarks for acceptable mark rates, proportion of sub-legals, etc.
 - What is the process to review those MSFs (mark rates, sub legals, stock composition)?

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- UBC FRIM study results showed higher mortality and recommended reducing mortality. Suggestion to include a presentation on this at the March forum.

Coho

- Chilliwack hatchery has been very successful in producing coho, chum, etc. But I was refused a permit to fish for a funeral while rec anglers were allowed to fish in our territory. Concern about being refused access for a ceremonial fishery.
- SFC has been doing FSC fisheries on unmarked coho in recent years. DFO staff approach to approving FSC requests in different regions seems to be inconsistent. DFO needs to clarify decision rules. **ACTION**
- Note other recent studies on MSF release mortality as well; need to respect priority access.

Chum

- Note DFO committed to review 2024 chum management (concerns re rec starting season open). Also action item re providing chum/coho catch data.

Steelhead

- Would be good to have an update on the joint steelhead action plan.
- Want to see DFO & the Province come together to work on steelhead.
- Frustration about how steelhead restricts our fisheries, but we do need the Province to take responsibility and discuss with First Nations how to protect and rebuild steelhead.
- Reminder re UNDRIP/FPIC re all fisheries in our territories.

SEP

- Some of these big topics, SEP, monitoring, rebuilding are all potential topics for stand-alone/Visions Forum. For SEP, there may be issues worth discussing at the provincial level, while others are best discussed at AAROM or local levels.
 - For SEP, need to focus here on specific plans that affect the IFMP.
- We have many questions for SEP — want clarity on where they will be answered?
 - Questions were noted and will be shared with SEP/DFO and Forum planners to decide how to answer them.
 - What opportunities are there for FN to engage at larger scales re planning, e.g. SEHAB? DFO to report back. **ACTION**

Communications

- Request for clarity on UNDA action plan, and how DFO will implement it. **ACTION**
- A June Visions conference could address monitoring, how it's different in different areas, how to improve rec fishery monitoring. On UNDRIP, the RDG recently confirmed new direction coming from Ottawa.

Summary of Action items

- FSMC to re-distribute WCA report on Forum Renewal to Forum participants.
- DFO to provide rec Chum harvest in Johnston Strait.
- Request that DFO provide marine rec catch (not just Fraser River) for Post-season presentations as this is Fraser/Approach Fisheries Forum.
- Nicole to follow with with DFO SC staff re updated DNA data results from the SoG Coho assessment fishery.
- Request to review updated MSF stock composition results at the next Forum.
- Request to review MSFs in the current 2023/24 IFMP with high sub-legal encounters or high ratios of unclipped fish to determine if they should proceed.
- Request to include a presentation on the UBC release mortality study at the March forum.
- Request that DFO involve FNs in the Fraser Chinook FSAR work.
- Proposal to have the Province and DFO discuss steelhead/joint action plan.
- Marla/SEP: Confirm whether MM fish will have CWTs and/or PBT.
- Marla/SEP to share info on the SEP MM WG.
- Marla/SEP to share background documentation on SRKW prey production.
- DFO to report on opportunities for FN to engage at larger scales re SEP planning.
- Suggestion that FSMB provide more clarity on principles that guide its work/decisions.
- Request for DFO to provide clarity on UNDA action plan, and how DFO will implement it.
- Suggestion to invite the RDG to a Forum to discuss how DFO operationalizes priority access in planning.
- Request that DFO clarify decision rules for approving FSC fishery requests (concerns that not consistent across regions).
- Requests for a 4th forum and/or Visions conference to start tackling complex topics such as IFMP reform, priority access, UNDRIP, SEP, MM/MSF policies, stock rebuilding, catch monitoring.
- Suggestion to have Forum PPTs submitted earlier to permit review by Forum planners to ensure appropriate language, focus and level of detail.
- Suggestion to have more narrowly focussed agendas to permit time to dig more deeply into key issues.
- Request for more focussed/structured Tier 1 Forum time.