

Forum Documents

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

Tier 1 Participants

Marcel Shepert, Facilitator

Greg Witzky, FSMC ED

Tina Chestnut, FSMC

Nathan Lustig, SFC

Sally Hope, Seabird

Kim Charlie, Sts'ailes

Pat Matthew, SFC, FSMB

Dominic Hope, Yale, FSMC MT

Brian Wadhams, Namgis

Ray Silvey, Pender Hbr

Lee Silvey, Pender Hbr

Ray Harris, FNS

Michael Staley, FSMC JTC Co-Chair

Marc Labelle, FSMC JTC

Bernette Laliberte, Cowichan

Patrice Pellegrin, Titg'et?

Ken Taylor, Titg'et

Becky Riley, Statimc

Darrian Hachez, Klahoose

Byron Harry, Klahoose

Harold Amos, NTC

Jessica Moffatt, IMAWG

Nicole Frederickson, IMAWG

Sonora Thompson, IMAWG

Kyle Lewis, IMAWG

Kelsey Campbell, UFFCA, JTWG Co-Chair

Pete Erickson, Nakazdli, FSMC MT

Pete Nicklin, TNG

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Sharmayne Page, FSMC

Dawn Steele, Note taker

ONLINE

Ken Malloway, LFFA, FSMB

Andrew Jackson

Victor Isaac, Namgis, FSMC MT

Don Sam

Janice Billy

Tony Roberts Jr, Atlegay, FSMB

Tracy Wimbush, Shackan Band, FSMC MT

Tina Donald, FSMC VP

Reid Bryshun, AEW

Shane John, Chawathil

Rod Peters, Seabird

Aidan Fisher, LFFA, JTC

Sherry McIntyre, Skuppah

Kristin Hrapchak, FSMC

Don Simpson, LFE LP

Johnny G

Les Antone, Kwantlen, FSMC MT

Joelle Krol, Seabird

Tier 2 Participants

IN PERSON

Sheldon Evers, DFO

Colin Schwindt, DFO

Matt Parslow, DFO

Kaitlyn Dionne, DFO, JTC

Madeline Thomson, DFO JTC

Brittany Jenewein, DFO JTC CO-Chair

Jeff Grout, DFO, FSMB

Mike Hawkshaw, DFO

Jeff Radford, DFO

Sunny , DFO

Kevin Pellett, DFO

Andrea Goruk, DFO

ONLINE

Al Magnan, DFO, FSMB

Amy Wakelin, DFO

Brandon Wood, DFO

Christine Bukta, DFO

Dean Allan, DFO

Geil Roberts, DFO

Heather Braun, DFO

Jacob Omajali, DFO

Jeff Reader, DFO

Mikaela Bacon, DFO

Patricia House, DFO

Owen Pankratz, DFO

Robin Hawes, DFO

Sukriti Khanna, DFO

Sydney Cappus, DFO

Sheldon Romain, DFO

Tagan Wardrop, DFO

Max Veilleux, DFO JTC

Zaynah Khan, DFO

Steve Ratko, DFO

Duncan Stephen, DFO, FSMB

Kory Ryde, DFO

Rob Martin, DFO

Tier 2 Welcome, Agenda, Objectives & Protocols

Following introductions, Marcel briefly reviewed Forum protocols, meeting objectives and Forum agenda, stressing the importance of being solution-focussed.

Tier 2 JTWG Sockeye Recap

Madeline Thomson, DFO

DFO briefly reviewed a summary of the March 4 JTWG (Joint Technical Working Group) presentations/discussions, noting:

- Key points were shared in detail in Tier 1, so this is a high level recap for the DFO members who just joined.
- Fraser sockeye forecast; deep dive into modelling and model selection for annual forecasting. Record low forecast for 2024 — very low brood, but also recent favourable marine conditions, so high uncertainty. Planned work including CSAS (Canadian Science Advice Secretariat) review of retrospective analysis of forecasting modelling.
- FRSSI 101: Overview of FRSSI (Fraser River Sockeye Spawning Initiative) model as a form of management strategy evaluation, with a focus on evaluating long term strategies (not annual tactical management decisions).
 - JTWG discussed questions about whether FRSSI is still an effective tool in the current/future context.
- Fraser Sockeye escapement planning. Started with review of the final 2023 data (noting review of discrepancies between estimates); overview of 2024 planning. Key discussion points: LAERs, escapement planning.
- Invitation for new indigenous technical reps to contact the JTWG co-chairs.

Discussion

- If Early Stuarts are so low, are test fisheries even needed? Who gets access and opportunities for these stocks?
 - Fraser Panel will look at test fishery options, especially for marine, to avoid Early Stuarts, including potential for non-lethal testing, delaying the start, avoiding gillnets, etc. Suggestions welcomed.
- Early Stuarts have been depressed for decades but we continue to use the same approaches and numbers (e.g TAM caps) to manage fisheries, so how do we discuss changes?
 - JTWG discussed how FRSSI was used to model the harvest control rules.
 - Changing the harvest caps won't make a difference, given that fishing is already so low so they don't come into play, so we need to look at other factors. With the numbers so low, if this is listed under the new Fish Stock Provisions, we will be required by the legislation to look at all other factors (non-fishery impacts) that are affecting this stock.
- IMAWG suggestion for selective sockeye and pink test fisheries.
 - We need to also consider how fish wheels can help with stock assessment. Also we should share test fishery harvest with elders instead of selling them.
- Q/A: DFO has looked at mortalities in marine rec fisheries. They are closed for sockeye retention, so for 2023, there was total mortality of about 100 sockeye (not just Early Stuarts)

estimated for total releases in Southern BC marine rec fisheries. **ACTION:** Mike Hawkshaw to provide more precise data re SBC rec sockeye impacts.

- Mortality of 100 sockeye is not acceptable, given conservation concerns. Marine rec fishery should be completely closed during Early Stuart migration.

2024 Expectations | Sockeye Forecast

Kaitlyn Dionne, DFO

DFO presentation highlights included;

- Forecast results are expressed as a range of probabilities (p50/mid range is most likely).
- Fraser sockeye returns and productivity: trending back up after recent historic lows.
- Important to consider environmental conditions (recap of recent time series for marine and freshwater indicators), even if they're not included in forecast modelling.
- 2024 forecast table (lowest on record): overall 567K at p50; with only 200 wild Early Stuarts.
 - Early Stuart hatchery component: not enough history to include in modelling, so the estimate provided is a very rough guess.
- Age composition: Why so many age 5 fish last year? Sockeye are generally seen as a 4-year cycle, but a certain proportion return as 5-year olds. So if the preceding year was a dominant run, it can affect the next year with a higher proportion of 5-year olds, as in 2023. Unfortunately, we don't expect a repeat of that effect this year.
- Key uncertainties include 10 stocks with projected returns of 1,000 or less, which raises serious concerns, and high uncertainty over productivity.

Discussion

- One million sockeye are supposed to be set aside for the Aboriginal Fisheries Exemption (AFE) under the PST. Since there are not even a million returning, will all other fisheries be closed to protect the returns? We are now facing a collapse. Did any charges result from the Mount Polley mine spill?
 - DFO: Hearing a proposal for a fishery moratorium. This would have a big impact on everyone, so we will consider and discuss that. The Mt. Polley investigation is still underway. **ACTION:** DFO to report on Mt Polley investigation and FN role in that.
- Q/A: Re in-season management, we would look at test fishery results, in-season run size estimates and options for fisheries if abundance permits.
 - If good numbers come back, we need to ensure there are opportunities for food fisheries.

FSMB | Sockeye Escapement Plan Options

Al Magnan & Tony Roberts, Jr, FSMB

Fraser Salmon Management Board presentation highlights included:

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- Process changes for 2024 planning: FSMC JTC reps involved in DFO's annual technical planning process to develop four options for the Board to consider:
 - Option 1: like 2020.
 - Option 2: similar but higher return threshold before directed fisheries allowed.
 - Option 3: Similar but with 20% LAER.
 - Option 4: Similar but with 5% LAER.
- FSMB reviewed/discussed the options and agreed on the 2 options (1 and 4) to include in the draft IFMP, with the understanding that other options could also be considered.
- If a large year was expected, the Board would have considered including more options.
- Option 1: Key pros and cons. Provides some flexibility, but could affect Early Stuarts, Early Summers.
- Option 2: More conservative — reduced LAER to protect Early Stuarts, Early Summers and reduced TAM cap for Early Stuarts at higher run sizes. Cons: may restrict early fisheries.

2024 Management | Fraser Sockeye

Mike Hawkshaw, DFO

DFO presentation highlights included:

- DFO seeking feedback on proposed 5-week window closure again to provide extra protection for the early part of Early Summers MU (impacted by Big Bar).
- Natal stream broodstock collection for Early Stuart, Taseko and Bowron sockeye conservation enhancement.
- Stock Selective Terminal FSC fisheries: DFO using new term suggested by JTWG after complaints about the former ESSR (Excess Salmon to Spawning Requirement) term. Interest in new/alternative stock-specific fishery evaluation, how such fisheries may affect the 4 MUs and PST aggregate management frameworks.
 - Existing framework is designed to support single stock terminal sockeye fisheries where abundance is expected to exceed spawning requirements. Designed to allow flexible approaches and higher harvest rates where there is less uncertainty.
- IFMP questions: Seeking input on escapement plan options, window closures and stock specific fisheries.

Discussion

- Q/A: Clarification re reference points for Early Stuart being out of synch with expectation for 200 returns. This speaks to earlier concerns about the management framework not fitting the current reality.
 - Q/A: Re whether rec fisheries would close, the LAER is intended to cover incidental impacts in non-target fisheries, with priority for supporting FSC access to other stocks.
 - Rec fisheries should close if Early Stuart are so low — i.e. LAER of zero.

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- What percentages of the MU are protected with 3-, 4- and 5-week window closures?
 - DFO: The objective of the original 3-week closure was to protect 90% of the Early Stuart run. We looked at extending that window closure to protect early components of Early Summers. But those have extended migration periods, so a 5-week window closure will protect 60 - 70% of those early Early Summers (caveat that run timing curves for these estimates are based on limited data).
- If only 200 Early Stuart are returning, every one should get back to the spawning ground, so we should look at timing of test fisheries. Rec anglers should not be allowed in the Chilliwack River if they are snagging Sockeye. We would not be allowed to do that.
- What accommodation is DFO providing for these window closures, which are impacting our cultural practices, sustenance and livelihoods? Agree there should be no test fisheries if Early Stuarts are returning so low. When will DFO have a recovery plan for Early Stuarts? We have not fished these for generations now. I support Option 2, but would like to see the TAM caps moved from 50% to 30% or 40%.
 - DFO: A lot of work has been done to support Early Stuart recovery over the years. This is one of the stocks in line to be listed in Batch 2 under regulation (new Fish Stock Provisions), which require a rebuilding plan for all stocks that are below their reference points. DFO expects the listing to be formalized this year. Once listed, we will need to identify an appropriate level of protections, limits to impacts in test fisheries, and potential bycatch in in-river Chinook FSC fisheries. Other potential impacts include WC troll and marine rec, both of which are already non-retention for sockeye, so DFO does not expect significant fisheries impacts on Early Stuarts.
 - DFO is still allowing other sectors to have access and opportunity when we are not getting our food needs met, which goes against case law. If there is enough to allow even the smallest impacts in other sectors, FSC should also be allowed. So everything else should be closed and any small impacts should be reserved for FSC. DFO management has led to the collapse of our fish stocks, so we should be focussed now on rebuilding for the next seven generations.
- We have other local stocks that we can rely on for our marine fisheries, so we need to look at those too, and think differently about management. We shouldn't be suffering because of mistakes made by others.
- We need to ensure DFO has a good plan for supporting returning stocks.
- Suggestions invited from participants to ensure that priority topics are identified for the next Forum agenda.
 - Would like to see a presentation on steelhead. **FORUM 3 AGENDA**
 - Steelhead PPT was planned for Day 3 but Provincial rep was not available, so will have that for April Forum.

Southern BC Coho

Jeff Radford, DFO

DFO presentation highlights:

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- Interior Fraser River (IFR) Coho: management framework; current Low status.
- Other coho: SoG pilot sampling program; Lpwer Fraser mark recapture program.
- N'Quatqua program
- IFR Coho abundance trends.
- New for 2024/25 and management questions.

Discussion

- IFR Coho have not been fished up here for 40 years and should have had recovery plans in place many years ago. It's taken so many years to get here, so propose keeping current limits until we hit all benchmarks, and ensure FSC has priority to any available impacts.
- Is the Five Nations proposal within the Coho window closure? How is the 3 - 5% ER managed? How accurate/uncertain is current management in terms of meeting the targets? If they're recovering, we should allow them to re-establish in their traditional habitat before knocking them back again. We saw migration challenges in some systems last year, so those need to be considered, and we also need to boost resiliency to cope with climate change impacts, instead of jumping to higher harvest rates so soon.
 - DFO to share IFR Coho harvest table to help answer these questions. **ACTION**
 - DFO: Any increase in harvest rate for 2024 would go to FSC, not other groups. Proposed dates for the WCVI fishery are intended to avoid IFR coho. There has been a rebuilding strategy, with gradual improvement seen, but marine survival remains low. There may be room to increase exploitation, but do we have the necessary tools to manage at that small a scale? Probably not.
 - JTWG will review IFR Coho ER tables at their April meeting. **JTWG AGENDA**
- Re estimated impacts, do we believe the US numbers? Also questions about the SoG pilot fishery.
 - DFO: PSC harvest rates are jointly agreed by the US and Canada and they do include Alaska impacts. The US has not been catching their full 10% in recent years either. Any ER increase would only go to increase FSC access.
- N'Quatqua program is doing a great job. We should consider this for other systems.
- Request that DFO provide proposed scenarios for increasing IFR Coho ER for JTWG to discuss. **JTWG AGENDA** Also want more detail of how current ER estimates are calculated and how those allowed impacts are shared to support fisheries. There is potential for rec fisheries to change: they are allowed to retain hatchery fish, some of which are IFR Coho. Propose also reviewing IFR Coho rebuilding objectives in this context. The last time we increased ER (2013-2014), the results were not positive, so urge a cautious approach.
 - DFO: That increase followed evidence of growing abundance, but as we saw, it speaks to the lack of effective tools to manage at a very fine scale.
- Q/A: High seas interceptions are a significant concern and Canada cooperates with the US to monitor and enforce rules.
- Support caution in easing current IFR Coho restrictions.

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- Q/A: Strait of Georgia pilot sampling program is intended to address a stock assessment gap for Strait of Georgia Coho stocks.
 - Currently, Black Creek is the only indicator program. The pilot is intended to provide better information on hatchery/wild ratios. DNA results for 2020/2021 showed one IFR coho impact (fishery was designed to avoid them).
- In 2014, there was a good Sockeye run and people wanted access to them, and there was a good IFR coho return the previous year, so the commercial sector argued for increased IFR Coho ER to permit access to sockeye. But the impacts were excessive, so we've been more precautionary since then.
- There are already MSFs (Mark Selective Fisheries) for coho and hatchery production of marked coho for fisheries. We're seeing emerging problems with high incidental mortality in new Chinook pilot MSFs, so concern about similar problem of increased IFR Coho bycatch.
 - DFO: It would be at least several years before we could move to Moderate Zone management, and we would need to have those discussions first.

Day 1 adjourned: 4 pm

Day 2 | Tier 2: Welcome

Marcel proposed skipping JTWG update as it seemed redundant and starting off with the FSMB/JTC Chinook Presentation.

FSMB Fraser Summer 52 Chinook Management

Jeff Grout & Pat Matthew, FSMB

Highlights of joint presentation included:

- FSMC/Pat noted huge complexity to Fraser Chinook management, including PST aspects. DFO has helped FSMB develop a work planning format to develop objectives and do the necessary work in time to meet annual fishery planning deadlines, but given the complexity and FSMB's limited capacity, there is only so much we can take on, so thank JTC, FSMC staff and everyone supporting us. An important challenge for FSMC is to get better organized to hear from and report back to regions/delegate members, though we are making progress. Last year DFO and FSMC had a formal Dispute Resolution process over management of Summer 52s, but we have agreed on management for other stocks. Other challenges include data gaps, and how to deal with high uncertainty, as we try to get to consensus decisions and recommendations consistent with our respective mandates.
- Chinook timelines, including data availability and IFMP dates. Board has worked to align their work with these timelines (caveats re delays in some key data).
- Summary of FSMB work plan goal/objectives for Chinook, including to develop quantitative objectives.
- Review: 2023 planning process: Board spent some time unpacking reasons for the DR and improving planning process/timelines.

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- 2024 planning:
 - Science process/timelines; Science advice.
 - Fraser Chinook stock assessment to inform development of management objectives.
 - MSFs: reviewing pilots and also plan to work on proposed MSF framework.
- 2023/24 JTC process — Chinook:
 - Review of FMI results/draft memo; report to FSMB with key fundings, uncertainties and recommendations based on FMI work; review of how DFO's 2023 decisions were made to reduce impacts on Summer 52s.
- Initial 2023 management outcomes: improved escapement.
- FMI results for 2022, relative to base period, recent average.
- Key JTC recommendations based on FMI analysis.
- 2024 consensus recommendations for managing Fraser stocks of concern, as included in the draft 2024/25 IFMP.
- Priority access for FSC: 2023 planning maintained FSC fishery plans, i.e. very limited early fisheries, focussing harvest on Summer 41s, restricted impacts elsewhere to incidental/bycatch.
 - FSMB continuing to discuss how to operationalize priority access (also key focus of SAP review).
- Discussion questions.

Discussion

- We have a lot of local knowledge and a guardian program that can support the need for better data in marine areas — e.g. where to catch Chinook without affecting Fraser stocks.
- We used to fish for Chinook year round in SoG, then DFO gave priority to the sport fishery, so now the whole world can come here to catch Chinook for the price of a rec licence while we sit on the beach. The goal of commercial licensing has been to get us out of the fishery. All these grand schemes and none have brought Chinook back.
- Q/A: Extra 2023 measures included delayed start for Area F and Area G. In the rec fishery, restrictions were extended (reduced catch and possession limits to 1/day) on WCVI and NC.
- When DFO discovered high Chinook bycatch in mid-water trawl, they shut the fishery in Area 12 mid season. Is DFO considering a cap on rec bycatch mortality, which is twice as high?
 - For rec, DFO is collecting info on mortalities for key populations relative to objectives as the key management tool.
 - Why not address rec interceptions on WCVI and JS? We're supposed to be first after conservation but in reality that is not the practice.
- **Correction** re Slide 12, rec are still catching and retaining Fraser Chinook.
- Priority for FSC is not being practiced. If FSC needs are not being met, other fisheries should close until there is sufficient data to show they are not affecting that.

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- Re proposed work to develop benchmarks — are those for CUs or MUs? Would those include distributional criteria? Re FMI estimates, concern about assumptions re impacts from 3 months' sampling for fish that are migrating through these areas.
 - The proposed approach would consider status of CUs as part of the MU assessments. Re FMI data, acknowledge the issues noted, which is why we refer to it as an index and propose further work to understand uncertainties.
- The trawl fishery was impacting Chinook for many years, taking Chinook that could have gone to FSC. Pleased to see an annual fleet cap but it means each boat can still impact 200 Chinook, which is still too much. DFO did not consult with us before setting that cap, so propose reducing it to 100 per boat. Southern BC marine etc bycatch is twice as high, so that is still an issue. Propose no fishing for SBC marine rec from April to July. If not, apply an annual cap. We want to see conservation objectives for Chinook in writing. Also were enhanced Chinook clipped?
 - DFO: Chinook caught in a groundfish trawl is called bycatch. Catch of non-target Fraser stocks in a rec Chinook fishery is called incidental catch. FSMB agrees the current management objectives are too vague, so hoping to set clear, quantitative objectives. In Canada, most clipped fish are for CWT stocks, though we intend to start mass marking Canadian production. But most clipped fish seen here are US bound stocks.
- **ACTION:** FSMB to discuss permission to release JTC memos to Forum and/or JTWG.
- **ACTION:** Mike H to send link to Holt paper.
- Q/A: CSAS meetings are in late April.
- DFO responded rapidly to increasing bycatch in groundfish trawl. Incidental mortalities in SBC rec fisheries are also increasing.
 - In the rec fishery, MSF releases are included in FMI and CWT estimates. In groundfish trawl, DFO is still analyzing stock ID to understand impacts on specific Chinook stocks, whereas we have that already in salmon rec fisheries.
 - Issue is whether CWT impacts are being detected, with the high number of releases.
- Q/A: Are further restrictions being contemplated? Advice is being welcomed through processes like this.
- Commercial fishers can be fined \$3,000 for each fish if they have non-permitted bycatch, while other sectors have far greater impacts. The rules need to be fair to all.
- Why is commercial trolling in SoG a lower priority, while such fisheries are permitted on WCVI and NC?
 - That relates to SAP implementation. Commercial access to Chinook and Coho come after recreational, FSC and conservation. That's being discussed in the SAP review. Canada has fishery access under different PST provisions on WCVI and NC, so that's why those fisheries are permitted.
 - We're still not getting good answers to why we're shut down, while the rec sector has unlimited access, affecting FSC and conservation.

Southern BC Chinook: 2024 Planning Considerations

Mike Hawkshaw, DFO

Highlights of DFO presentation included:

- Southern BC Chinook: 2024 management objectives.
- In addition to Summer 52 objectives, PSC has asked Canada to ensure non-retention impacts are appropriately included in ER analysis for certain fisheries managed under PST frameworks.
- Draft MSF Implementation Framework is included in draft IFMP for consultation: it outlines regulatory and policy context, planning considerations and catch monitoring.
- New for 2024/25:
 - DFO seeking feedback on current management for Summer 52 Chinook and proposal for Cowichan Chinook.
 - WCVI Chinook: Area G has requested earlier start date and revised in-shore CSAF (demonstration) fishery proposal.
 - Five Nations proposal to remove 80 cm size restriction for Chinook sale fishery.
 - Proposal to allow new MSF fishery to access large number of marked fish in Area 25.
 - Area D proposal for changes to their terminal fishery in Area 25.

Discussion

- These new issues are not yet on the FSMB agenda, e.g. Area G proposal, which we should maybe consider, as well as the Five Nations proposal. FSMB should discuss any changes/fisheries that potentially impact Fraser Chinook. There should be a formal technical review process for proposed new fisheries, with the results shared so that we can discuss at FSMB.
 - So deeper analysis and lead time to permit the Board to do due diligence.
- Q/A: Re Cowichan River Chinook, the cited sub-areas (17 - 19) are currently closed and the question is about whether to open those to recreational angling.
 - Request that DFO provide more information/analysis on the impacts of the proposed changes — assume DFO has done evaluation?
- **ACTION:** DFO to share requested info re Cowichan proposal with Forum participants.
 - Re Cowichan proposal, until DFO has talked to Cowichan, and unless they approve, the answer from everyone here would be No. Why does DFO keep trying to open rec fisheries during conservation closures?
- More info needed re surf-line boundaries and impacts before commenting on proposed Area G change.
 - **ACTION;** DFO to provide more info re Area G proposal to fish within existing surf line boundary.

- FSMB briefly discussed the Area G proposal and agreed to look at that. The Area G fishery is part of a broader AABM area that was largely closed to protect Fraser Chinook in July and August. We have not traditionally seen Fraser stocks inshore, so doing further analysis. Proposal to share a map is a good one. JTC will review GSI data on these fisheries once it is available.

Mark Selective Fisheries

Mike Hawkshaw, DFO

DFO presentation highlights included:

- Background and key drivers under PSSI: Conservation, improved hatchery management and fishing opportunities.
- MSF/selective fisheries are an effective way to permit opportunities while protecting stocks of concern in mixed stock fisheries.
- Objectives for MM & MSF.
- Implementation approach: Interim approach (MSF pilots) and proposed MSF operational implementation framework.
- Map: MSF pilots.
- Draft MSF framework: overview, technical workshops to develop.
- Risk evaluation framework to support management, FRIM studies, enhanced monitoring (reference fishery, creel survey audits).
- Current/enhanced recreational fishery monitoring plan. Key features include independent verification of at-sea releases, reference fishery as a fisher-independent audit of creel results; collection of bio-samples, stock ID for releases.
- Longer term considerations: clearly defined frameworks, implementation plans; potential mass marking changes; review of SAP.

Chinook MSF Data Review

Kevin Pellett, DFO

DFO presentation highlights included:

- Summary of MSF times and areas: 2021-23.
- Overview of pilots, new 2023 pilot; note re mismatch between creel survey and MSF areas.
- 2021/22 MSF report, update versions.
- Tables: show sampling results for Fraser stocks of concerns.
 - Samples being collected from dockside creel, Avid Anglers and now from the Reference fishery.
 - Table showing number of samples needed for reasonable confidence.
 - Sampling results by month.

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- Legal size DNA samples for each pilot (2021 and 2022); results for extra-legal (larger sizes).
 - Summary of DNA results.
- MSF areas, preliminary 2023 results: higher catches in 2023.
- New MSFs: catch (below) vs projections.
- 2023 creel bulletin.

Discussion

- Q/A: Nicola fish will be analyzed and contribute to CWT results.
- We're in rebuilding mode and we don't touch our own fish in the Nimpkish to support rebuilding and yet we have sport fisheries allowed all around us. There are 16 tribes at the top of VI that have to be consulted regarding these fisheries. We need to have those conversations about protecting our fish and our interests — we also want to talk about FSC terminal fishery opportunities — before decisions are made and fisheries are opened again.
- Not one nation here supports MSF fisheries. It goes against our principles to do anything but retain fish for food. Reiterate our request for DFO senior management staff to meet with IMAWG to discuss a list of issues, including proposed new fishery.
- Thank DFO staff for this report and for the effort to address our earlier questions. DFO's intent of applying adaptive management to these MSFs is not consistent with planning 2024 fisheries while staff are still working on the 2021 report. Are all new MSF proposals for this year in the draft IFMP? What are the quantitative benchmarks for mark rates for MSFs? These presentations should include data on the number of releases, not just kept, as those have also been increasing.
 - DFO: Agree that information should be shared. Mark rates are context specific — it matters what else is in the area and other factors (trying to address in the draft framework).
 - Q/A: There could be additional new MSF proposals that are not in the draft IFMP.
- For the Reference Fishery, there are DNA samples that have not yet been analyzed. Important to share that before final meetings to shape IFMP advice. Re sampling, your need to ID sampling needs by time strata (discuss at JTWG). How are Reference Fishery results informing MSF management (e.g. if there are very low mark rates, would that fishery be closed?). Note that many DFO staff travelled from the BC Interior to support the reference fishery; want to see the same staff effort devoted to DNA analysis.
 - DFO: We are prioritizing 2023 lab analysis. We need more discussion re how to use the Reference Fishery results (e.g. results of sampling unmarked releases, independent verification of creel reported mark rates).
- Agree the reference fishery can provide a good audit of reported releases and mark rates. But the challenge is sample sizes aren't enough to detect encounters of small numbers of stocks of concern. We know there are Fraser yearlings migrating in that area/period, but you would need far larger sample sizes to check that. You're also targeting resident rearing Fall Chinook as well as migrating fish. But confirming ERs will be extremely challenging.
 - DFO: We can combine Avid Angler and other data sets to help address these issues.

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- Concern re continuing the Reference Fishery — see it as a DFO staff demo fishery. We can't do our own validating, so this is having the fox guarding the hen house.
- Are these still pilots or not? If the data to evaluate them is not available, there should not be MSFs or MM until the required data is available. Question re status of SAP (still using the 1990s SAP or is there a new one?). Frustrating to see these fisheries happening without proper data and impeding our ability to meet our FSC needs. Concern that there is no consultation with the nations about proposed fisheries, despite confirmed impacts on Fraser stocks of concern. DFO needs to share the full picture, including total releases. DFO needs to work on transparency to rebuild trust. What happens to fish caught in the reference fishery? It needs to have proper enforcement and monitoring. We asked for an MSF opportunity in river but were denied, so DFO statements re these being available to FNs are not accurate. Agree there should be no MSFs in Area 20.
 - DFO: Reference fishery is conducted by DFO staff, using guide boats provided by SFI. All fish are sampled, then live released.
- Rec access seems to take priority over FSC access, and our monitoring/reporting requirements are stricter.
 - DFO; Acknowledge there is not agreement on these issues. FSC is open in marine areas when marine rec is open; in river rec is closed when FSC is closed. FSMB has tried to allocate the majority of impacts to FSC, and DFO's 2023 reductions for the Summer 52s were focussed on restricting commercial and rec. How we operationalize allocation of bycatch and incidental mortalities is a significant question in the SAP review, so we recognize the need for principles around this.
- IMAWG's position is that rec fisheries/MSFs should be in terminal areas where they can be regulated and selective. We need to close MSFs in conservation areas because despite the minimal sampling and data, they are still showing impacts on stocks of concern. Rec catch and releases have increased so FRIM for rec releases now exceeds FSC catch. What about VI stocks being put at risk by these new MSFs? The conservation closures were supposed to also help VI stocks. Frustrating to see DFO committing so much capacity and resources to a non rights based fishery... because of their political clout? DFO said new MSFs would not occur until 2 years after new MM, but the opposite is happening. Shut them down until we get the data and FNs give their consent.
- FSMC has been trying to ensure that the MSF framework, at least where it affects Fraser Chinook, is on the Board's agenda and it's now finally on our agenda. The draft IFMP does not reference FSMB's role. We specifically asked for that to be included and will continue to press for that to be in the final IFMP. FSMB and JTC are also looking at pilot MSFs which are to open in April/May under the current IFMP. So there is hope now that the door is open. But there is also concern about individual nations having capacity to explore and understand implications of these MSFs for their individual stocks and interests via the IFMP process. These should remain pilots for now, given all the issues, concerns, need for standards, etc.
- We are producing and clipping fish for endangered stocks, so aren't MSFs jeopardizing conservation goals? Why would you clip endangered fish?
 - DFO: The reason is to support genetic management in brood stock selection.

- I have a vessel in the Reference Fishery — invite other FNs to join me to observe the process.

Chum Update

Jeff Radford, DFO

DFO presentation highlights included:

- Overview of planning for 2024 Southern BC Chum fisheries.
- Most SC Chum are in Low status category and not expected to meet targets, so DFO proposing to open the season with Chum non-retention for both rec and commercial., including for the Fraser tributaries, and in-season estimates of abundance will determine in-season management.
- Summary of Outlook for SC Chum populations.
- DFO seeking feedback on new CSAS demo fishery proposal for Area H limited entry directed Chum fishery for Area 13.

Discussion

- Never encountered Steelhead in 60 years of fishing in Johnston Strait — we need sound science to support these closures.
- Concern that DFO is not looking at the issue of pinniped predation.

Steelhead Update

- Projections for Interior Fraser steelhead that returned in 2023 to spawn in 2024 are 228 for Thompson and 108 for Chilcotin. These estimates are based on Albion encounters between late August and early November. Final escapement estimates will be available later in 2024.
- For last year, the final spawning escapement estimates were 371 for Thompson and 134 for Chilcotin, which is an improvement over the prior few years, but still well below recovery targets.
- So for 2024, the draft IFMP includes window closures similar to those in place since 2019.
- Canada remains committed to the joint Canada BC Joint Steelhead Action Plan, and is continuing to work with First Nations and stakeholders to ensure that all our programs, including hatchery and habitat, are aligned to support steelhead recovery.
- Recap of details of the rolling window closures to protect IFR steelhead (details are in the IFMP).

Discussion

- Update re TNG's genetics research to support steelhead recovery/fishery management; and closure of their right-based fishery to protect steelhead.
- Q/A: Clarification of respective DFO and BC roles in managing steelhead.

- Noted that Jenn Davis, senior BC official responsible for steelhead was not able to make it to this Forum, but that Forum planners will re-schedule an update from the Province in April.

Day 2 Adjourned

Day 3 | Tier 2 - What We Heard

DFO and FSMC presented the summary of key messages heard. This end-of-Forum recap was started by DFO last year and now reflects a joint effort by DFO and FSMC, recognizing FSMB's growing role in some aspects of management.

- **Sockeye:** Escapement plan options: Key factor will be choice of LAER caps, given low 2024 returns expected.
 - Interest in conservative approaches to support rebuilding; potential impacts of test fisheries, LAER potentially impacting FSC fisheries, closing other fisheries if FSC not being met, request for accommodation; rebuilding questions, including hatchery role; one recommendation re reducing TAM caps.
 - Next steps and tech questions: Early Stuart rebuilding plans.

Discussion

- Interior (Tracy/Don Sam) support 4-week window closure (not 5). Plan further discussion with leadership but lots of concern re restrictions, given growing reliance on Chinook, including wrt potential SARA listing. **Forum 3 AGENDA**
- Former test fishery provided useful info but was cut.

Presentation, continued:

- **Coho:** implications of increasing ER, with focus on access for FSC.
 - Heard interest in continuing conservative approach, given results of 2014. Also data requests re impacts in US fisheries, 2014 management, data from SoG and Lr Fraser assessment work. Interest in coho rebuilding plan, highlighting work being done by FNs, interest in revisiting Nicola FSC MSF proposal. DFO to distribute new PSC coho mortality tables, JTWG to review info in April.

Discussion

- Needs to be clear that the feedback sought by DFO was about increasing ER for FSC specifically, not for other fisheries. When we discuss this, we need the data and analysis of how current impacts are shared and details of what would change.
- Interest in reviewing data re encounters from SoG coho assessment fishery re potential impacts on IFR coho.

Presentation, continued:

- **Chinook:** lots of feedback, grouped under key themes (see PPT):
 - Frustration re operationalizing FSC priority — FSMB proposing work on this.
 - Frustration re marine rec: heard several suggestions: close all marine rec, close when stocks of concern are present, potential cap on marine rec FRIM.

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- Reduce 9.5K Chinook bycatch cap for mid water trawl.
- Need to review data on new fishery proposals; need to engage Cowichan first (FPIC) and also consider impacts on other stocks, implications for other fisheries.
- Suggestion to shift rec fisheries to terminal areas.
- Concerns re why management is inconsistent for different fisheries (e.g. caps)
- Concerns re sampling and GSI for stocks of concern: potential support from guardians, caution re how samples are grouped, whether CWTs being detected in released fish.
- Next steps: FSAR work and conservation objectives.
- Information sharing: improved info sharing, e.g. JTC memo, marine rec stats on releases.
- MSF specific feedback: Nations not supporting MSFs (case law, UNDRIP, FPIC, etc).
 - Proposed IMAWG/DFO meeting.
 - Proposed thresholds for mark rates, etc; providing GSI results in time for Forums. If results not ready, pilots should not happen. Questions about reference fishery and how that informs management.
 - Need for adequate resourcing to provide timely data, recommendation re SAP that rec closed until adequate frameworks to understand impacts on FSC.
- Next steps/Actions:
 - Sharing JTC/FSMB FMI memo; new FSAR process, question re marking of Big Bar stocks (marked first year, not subsequently); follow up re question re CWTs in releases, details re Area G proposal, discussion with NVI nations re fisheries in their area (outside Forum scope, but will pass on). Sharing of Holt paper (in progress).
- Key deadline is provision of GSI data from MSFs in time for April JTWG/Forum.

Discussion

- Current rec monitoring program is inadequate. DFO has a double standard re “affordability” of adequate programs.
 - Potential role of VI guardian programs to address gaps.
- DFO needs to consult all relevant nations re Cowichan proposal.
 - We have discussed deep dive into monitoring as a potential topic for Visions conference.
- Q/A: Funding for MSF development is coming from PSSI.

Presentation, continued:

- **Chum:** Rec chum fisheries closed in JS based on feedback from last year’s Forum.

Discussion

- Q/A: Re the Area H demo fishery, that was submitted by the fleet committee, so questions can go to them (Details included on P 548 of IFMP).
- Opportunities for Chum in Lr Fraser is important, consistent with traditional practices.

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Presentation, continued:

- **Steelhead:** Noted that TNG has closed their rights based steelhead fishery and is doing stock assessment work.
- Marine fishers say they rarely if ever encounter steelhead.

Discussion

- PSSI is being used to create opportunities for non-native fisheries in our territory, so that needs to change.

Presentation, continued:

- DFO is working to answer questions about Mt. Polley follow up, including what is the indigenous role.

Discussion

- Follow up/distribution: FSMC will share everything via Website (Tier 1 minutes via email) and will send an email when it's all ready/on the website.
- Note that DFO has an obligation in talking to other sectors to avoid pointing blame at First Nations and addressing systemic discrimination that has been perpetuated by governments over time.
- Just heard that DFO is re-issuing fish farm licences for six years and that comment period ends tomorrow. We will be issuing a letter.

Marcel thanked everyone for participating, noting there were thoughtful and productive discussions, with a strong focus on solutions.

Adjourned: 11:30 am