

Welcome

FSMC ED Greg Witzky welcomed everyone and introduced facilitator/Forum Chair Nick Chowdhury, following which the host nation welcomed everyone with an opening prayer/song. Following introductions, Nick reviewed the Forum 1 agenda.

Forum Renewal

Greg Witzky, FSMC ED

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- Background and Forum evolution over the past 17 years.
- 2019 signing of the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement (FSMCA) between DFO and (now) 78 First Nations signatories introduced a new, formally mandated process.
- Recap of steps to date to support Forum renewal, including West Coast Aquatic report highlighting key considerations for change, process strengths and areas for renewal.
- Recommendations: Clarify roles, responsibilities and connections between FSMB, FSMC, Forums and First Nations, strengthen regional planning process, refine JTWG role.
- Forum renewal team members.
- Summary of key issues identified at Forum Renewal workshop in January 2025, including challenges, opportunities; ideas for renewal, and small changes being implemented in January 2025.
- Next steps: Forum Renewal and Forum Planning. Questions and suggestions welcome.

What We Heard Check In

Robin Hawes, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- WWH presentations introduced in 2023 as part of ongoing Forum renewal, co-developed by DFO and FSMC staff.
- Key themes and advice heard last year and action taken, updates for the following:
 - General topics, UNDRIP, traditional values, FSC priority, building on process improvements.
 - Forum and JTWG process.
 - Interior Fraser Coho: Importance of honouring FSC priority in allocating fishery impacts, better understanding of US impacts, implications of 2014 changes; agreed that any move from current regime should happen collaboratively.
 - Steelhead: Interest in DFO, Province and FNs working collaboratively.

- Fraser Chinook: information sharing/process, engagement in decision making, consideration of all Fraser stocks in management decisions; identifying conservation objectives and ensuring FSC priority is honoured in sharing of harvest impacts.
 - Chinook mark selective fisheries (MSFs): Follow up technical work, consultations, addressing monitoring concerns.
- Sockeye management: Key issues included escapement plan options, window closures, effects of LAER regime on FSC access; conservation needs, limiting impacts of test fisheries in low abundance years.

Discussion

- Good presentation. BC's past failures to consult with First Nations on steelhead management noted. Relationships have improved, but concerns remain about window closures impacting FN fisheries for Chum and Coho in particular. Lower Fraser nations have urged BC to ID their steelhead encounters, which may be other stocks (not conservation concerns). First Nations opposed a 2024 proposal to re-open large areas in Georgia Strait to recreational fishing, potentially affecting Fraser Chinook stocks of concern. DFO did not want FSMB to discuss individual proposals, but we insisted. FSMB also trying to address Mark Selective Fisheries, overall rec impacts on Chinook and high release mortalities.
- Proposed actions/Forum agenda items for FPC to follow up: Request for DFO update on SAP, discussion of Coho management, DFO update on fisheries science process for Chinook, discussion of MSF implementation framework.
- Need to respect traditional values and practices for each territory. Given growing closures and nations not meeting food needs, when will it be recognized as an emergency, with the need for DFO to act proactively?

Post Season Review: Fraser Chinook

Brittany Jenewein, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- Recap of 2024 management objectives for Fraser Chinook Management Units (MUs).
- In-season assessment: Albion test (April 21 - Oct 20). Modest returns expected.
- Post season assessment: approach, escapement.
 - Updated escapement graphs to 2023, brood comparisons for the five MUs (record overall escapement Summer 41 MU, although one component stock Maria Slough, is endangered).
 - Preliminary escapements for 2024 (field estimates).
- Fraser River catch summary: Lower Fraser FSC, BCI FSC and rec.
- Post season assessment: Fishery Mortality Index (FMI) is a relatively new management performance evaluation tool that combines mortality data from the Run Reconstruction model + GSI sampling of marine catch to provide an index of annual fishery impacts/trends by fishery for each MU.
 - Overview shared here (FMI reports provide additional details).

- List of known issues to consider in evaluating this post-season info.
- Updated FMI summary including 2023 fishery impacts; more detailed tables summarizing catch numbers, percentage FMI and distribution of fishery mortality for the Summer 52 MU.
- Implications: Conservation status remains poor for early-timed Chinook.
 - While fishery impacts have been reduced in recent years and escapement increased, some stocks remain below target/serious conservation concern, warranting continued precautionary management.

Discussion

- Q/A: DFO unable to confirm a scientific explanation for the unexpected 2023 increase for Summer 41s, though a recent improvement in ocean conditions may be a factor.
 - This should be considered an anomaly, not a new norm. Rec anglers are out fishing right now and we don't know what they're catching.
- Q/A: For stocks below their SMSY escapement target, fishery impacts are restricted.
 - DFO needs to keep in mind FSC priorities for fishery access.
- Q/A: DFO provided a list of individual stocks in the early-timed Fraser Chinook MUs.
- DFO is not implementing conservation measures and rec catch is increasing while conservation targets are not being met. Fish are being caught in marine waters with no creel right now.
- We raised issues in the past, and DFO pointed to the IFMP as their guidance document, which permits rec anglers to play with our food.
- Graphs show rec fisheries taking the lion's share of harvest for Summer 52s.
 - DFO: The rec harvest is mostly in marine areas. FSMB's JTC addresses this in depth in a technical memo to be shared shortly to inform 2025 fishery management.
- We need to emphasize the severity of conservation issues for individual Chinook stocks in the Upper Fraser. Preliminary spawning surveys showed zero spawners in one system. Some systems and Nations don't get to access any of these fish, while rec fisheries have access to support their fisheries. We need to explain these concerns to those who are fishing at this level of detail, so that they understand and that this hopefully leads to angler decisions to avoid being part of extinguishing stocks.
 - DFO: Hard to hear online, but the FMI data has been developed to better understand what is happening with the Early-timed MUs that we're trying to protect and recent management has sought to focus fishery effort on the abundant Summer 41s. We have conservation objectives and have reduced mortalities on Spring 42s and 52s to very low levels. Summer 52s remain a concern due to overlap with Summer 41s, where we've focussed fishery effort, so this has been the focus of FSMB's recent work. These concerns/suggestions heard have informed our approach to inform the Board's 2025 management decisions. FSMB's JTC has developed a package of detailed technical information that would be helpful to review.
- IFMP has an allocation of 70K for all First Nations for FSC, which is not being met, while the rec sector is catching more than us and on top of that, the stocks are not doing well.

- Management must respect traditional rights, values and impacts to our communities, Up-river nations are not getting any FSC, while other sectors are fishing ahead of us.
- Recreation take the lions share since 2019, when we signed on to the CMA at Katzie FN. Can we talk about curtailing recreational in April, May, June and July? 74,084 is their total catch but there are also release data gaps, so that number can double or triple in marine approaches. All the while our FSC is not fishing at all until August 20 usually. We need to change the IFMP; it is failing salmon. We speak for the salmon while they only speak for their \$\$.
- We want to catch our allocations, but we are facing all these issues.

WCVI Chinook AABM Fisheries: 2024 Post-season

Peter Hall, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- This presentation covers the offshore mixed stock (Aggregate Abundance Based Management) AABM fisheries.
- AABM Chinook pre-season, in-season and preliminary post-season catch for First Nations FSC, Maa-nulth treaty, Five Nations, AABM rec, Science and Area G commercial troll.
- Commercial fisheries (Area G) primarily target US Chinook stocks; fishery opening delayed to August 16.
 - Five Nations fishery restricted to inshore AABM areas before July 15 to avoid Fraser Chinook, with maximum size limit July 15 - 31.
- Area G springtime Chinook Demo fishery; inshore areas only, limited to 3,000 Chinook catch.
 - Table summarizing preliminary catch, GSI sampling results (7 Fraser Spring 52s, no Summer 52s). Fishery is scheduled to open April 1 under the current 2024/25 IFMP but may be ended earlier in May to avoid impacts to WCVI wild stocks of concern.
- WCVI Chinook rec fishery AABM catch/effort trends, showing preliminary catch estimate of approximated 40,000 for 2024.

Discussion

- Q/A: Inshore refers to areas inside the surf-line for the Area G demo.
- Why does it take so long to provide detailed sports sector data, whereas commercial is required to provide timely data? Also why show that rec catch is below estimates?
- Q/A: DFO to break out Okanagan stocks within the Columbia River component in their technical memo as requested. **ACTION**

ECVI Fisheries: 2024 Post-season

Mark Frisson, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

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- Numbers presented are preliminary; still being updated.
- 2024 SC FN fisheries (FSC, treaty, ESSR): summary table of catch (kept/released) for all salmon species.
- Johnston Strait commercial mixed stock Chum fisheries: Area B seine, Area H troll, Area D gill net and Demo fisheries — summary of Chum catch (kept/released).
- Recreational Chum: Typically open year-round at 4/day limit; opened with Chum non-retention; changed to retention in October when abundance confirmed.
- Recreational Coho: Primarily mark-selective fisheries, with some specific/terminal opportunities to retain wild Coho. Rec Coho catches were highest since 1997 (but below historical average based on former high-productivity regime). Believed that Coho are remaining/rearing in Strait of Georgia recently instead of migrating offshore.
- Recreational Chinook: Overview of rec fishery measures; 2024 Chinook MSFs.
 - 2024 Reference fisheries in MSF areas.
 - 2024 MSFs: Preliminary effort, kept catch, releases.
- 2024 ECVI recreational fisheries Chinook CPUE: rising with increased Chinook abundance.
- 2024 preliminary catch for salmon by species, 2023 and 2024.

Discussion

- Question about how MSFs go from pilots to permanent (not identified as pilots in the PPT).
 - DFO: MSFs are reviewed annually and subject to change if required. They are still pilots. The proposed evaluation framework is still draft and DFO is seeking input.
 - Ridiculous to keep identifying them as pilots, while they keep expanding. They are intended to work with full mass marking, which is not happening. What are mark rates and if it's less than 100%, they should not be happening.
 - DFO: They are targeting mostly US origin fish and can have significant mark rates. There are seven pilots (2 are newer) and DFO is not planning to expand those now. DFO staff working on data for mark rates by fishery.
 - We just saw a new MSF proposal. What ratio of hatchery fish are marked?
 - DFO: A low percentage of Canadian hatchery fish are marked; stock assessment staff can share more info on mark rates in fisheries.
- Q/A: Why is SC rec coordinator presenting instead of the ECVI Salmon Coordinator? The Forum request for this came only one week prior to Forum, so this is who was available. DFO hopes we can engage with staff earlier next year to line up presenters.
 - Stress the importance of having the right DFO staff/presenters here. Request for more info on rec catch of Chum in Area 12, including Steelhead encounters, since our gillnet access is severely restricted.
- Q/A: Rec Chum only opened after it was clear commercial Chum would open. Rec does not have priority over commercial for Chum. Note recent management changes to start with rec closed instead of open in response to such concerns.

- What is the number of rec licences? Why do we continue to rely on non-retention to support conservation, given what we know about release mortality rates?
 - DFO: About 350K rec licences are issued annually. Non-retention significantly reduces impacts, effort, and supports enforcement.
 - Given concerns about ECVI stocks, why not full closures?
 - DFO: There are full finfish time and area closures for conservation concerns; MSFs permit opportunities while reducing impacts on stocks of concern.
- FN request for DFO to clearly show boundaries for the Mamalilikulla IPCA (Indigenous Protection & Conservation Area) re non-retention. **ACTION**
- Does DFO have an acceptable ratio re legal to sub-legals?
 - DFO: There is no one-size fits all rule.
 - The US sets caps for mark rates etc. to permit such fisheries. In our case, one MSF has no reference fishery (so no data on this), while the Area 13 and 15 MSF mark rates are under 30% (so 70% of fish caught are released). For Area 17-19 and 20, there are very high proportions of legal to sub-legal releases, indicating that anglers are sifting through many releases before choosing one to keep. More than 80% of releases are sub-legals, with high mortality for those, especially for sub-legals. DFO claims they are primarily encountering US fish but this is not always true. Area 13, 15 and Mainland Inlets MSFs are encountering a high proportion of local stocks. How many Chinook are killed in these fisheries that haven't been fully evaluated?
 - DFO: Can't provide immediate details but the mortalities are accounted for in the FMI and reporting systems.
 - Propose follow up on these concerns for next Forum.
- The 2024 recreational preliminary catch shows 207K Coho releases + 84K coho kept. What safeguards does DFO have in place to ensure the ER for IFR Coho is not exceeded?
 - DFO: Staff are in the early stages of developing new Coho plans and intend to engage nations. The current approach may not be the best, but propose we work together on this. Agree that number is large and commit to looking into it. **ACTION**
- The PPT shows 189K releases of Chinook in ECVI mixed stock fisheries, so that is for summer months and ECVI alone. For next Forum, request reference fishery data on mark rates, stock composition and releases. Propose DFO schedule a Tier 2 engagement with nations to discuss MSF issues.
- Concern that these fisheries are still occurring in our territories without our permission. We had no choice but to manage sustainably for thousands of years and now others try to manage fisheries in our territory without understanding/including us.

Fraser Coho & Chum Stock Assessment

Brittany Jenewein, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- Recap: IFR Coho status categories and US/Canadian ER caps (split 50/50) under the PST.

- Escapement/catch time series: meeting escapement goals but smolt/adult survival (productivity) remains low, so IFR Coho remains in Low status.
 - Fraser River catch summary for Coho.
- Fraser River chum managed based on in-season Albion test info; table of management breakpoints.
 - Fraser River catch summary for Chum.
 - Preliminary Run Reconstruction for Fraser Chum (pre-terminal run size): Working on a new model; only met escapement once in recent years; expect to meet for 2024.

Discussion

- Management breakpoints table says FSC management is “normal” at the 2024 run size, but Lower Fraser fisheries management is not normal (no overnight sets, hot pick).
 - DFO: Point taken. Normal intended to reflect allocations but can revisit wording.

Given overtime, JTWG presentation moved to Day 2 and Tier 2 adjourned.

Day 1, Tier 1

- In Camera

Day 1 Adjourned 5 pm

Day 2, Tier 2 Welcome

JTWG Update

Kelsey Campbell, Colin Schwindt, JTWG

Highlights of joint presentation included (See PPT for details):

- Overview of JTWG role, process; JTWG reporting/communication pathways & Jan 27 discussion topics:
- ToRs, changes under Forum Renewal.
 - Proposed next steps: better define linkages between JTWG and other bodies/processes; proposal for more resourcing to better utilize JTWG's significant technical capacity, potential to support collaborative management.
- Update on JTC/FSMB work plan, Chinook technical memos to support Board decisions, joint development of Sockeye escapement options.
 - Next steps: Continued discussion of JTWG/JTC linkages via development of FSMCMA structures, Forum renewal.
- 2024 Fraser Sockeye review; preliminary spawning escapements (E. Stuart, E Summers).
 - Next steps: Joint planning for 2025 escapement plan options.

- Canadian CTC Memo re updated recreational Chinook catch estimates based on inclusion of iRec data. Memo leaked after being shared with US, not Canadian indigenous reps.
 - Next Steps: DFO to brief JTWG on this work, implications and next steps (new info won't be available in time to inform 2025/26 IFMP planning).
- Updated Fisheries Mortality Index (FMI), explaining data sources, gaps, uncertainties and results re fisheries impacts on stocks of concern with 2023 data included.
 - Next steps: Review results further, explore how to address gaps/uncertainties.
- JTC review of the Fraser Run Reconstruction: Report on JTC's technical deep dive to better understand strengths and limitations of this tool. Recommended work to address key gaps.
 - Next steps: Partners to review the report and how they can help address gaps, proposed technical Visions meeting to explore next steps/solutions, including potential development of an in-season Chinook management tool.
- Report on 2023/24 enhanced Groundfish trawl monitoring/sampling to better understand Chinook bycatch, which found low impacts on Interior Fraser stocks.
- Fraser Chum management approach: technical overview of tools, 2024 process.
 - Next steps: Review of escapements, further model work.
- JTWG next meeting (Feb 24) and suggested topics.

FSMB Update

Jeff Grout (DFO) & Ken Malloway (FSMC), FSMB

Introductory comments:

- DFO: Board has been focussed on work to improve Chinook management, resolve disputes over that and develop consensus management solutions for 2025.
- FSMC: FSMC created as a mandated body to represent Fraser/Approach nations at the Board but parties were unable to agree in 2023 and 2024 on the management target for Summer 52 Fraser Chinook MU. The Board is trying again to reach consensus for 2025. Other points of debate include whether FSMB should deal with individual proposals or just set high-level direction. UNDRIP, reconciliation and Sparrow decisions are tools that can support the new process.

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- FSMB trying to develop a pilot process to consult externally (First Nations outside the FSCMA, fisheries sectors) on proposed 2025 management and also to be more transparent in sharing technical info that supports management decisions.
- Background: 2019 FSCMA signed by DFO and FSMC, establishing the joint FSMB and JTC.
- FSCMA implementation; FSMB work plan — focus on Chinook and Sockeye.
- Background: 2024/25 IFMP process, Chinook feedback and ministerial decision to continue current Chinook measures (due to no FSMB consensus).
- Board did reach consensus on Sockeye escapement plan that was adopted for 2024 IFMP.

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- Proposed 2025/26 approach: seeking to better align Board work with IFMP timelines, engage with groups externally, including Forum. Approach will be iterative/adaptive.
- Key steps: pilot engagement approach.
- Planning priorities: Conservation as top priority (not looking to increase FMI); FSC and treaty obligations, precautionary approach and sustainable harvests — so focus on what fisheries can go ahead while limiting impacts on stocks of concern.
 - FSMB developing potential scenarios consistent with objectives; JTC working to summarize technical advice to support consultation. Draft scenarios to be included in draft IFMP (vs accepting proposals late in the process as in 2024).
 - Many commercial and rec fisheries that impact these stocks are marine mixed stock fisheries that primarily target other abundant stocks.
 - FSMB will evaluate feedback and seek consensus recommendation for 2025.
- Chinook decision making timeline: Deadline for proposals in January, draft IFMP Feb 21, final IFMP feedback deadline in early April. Parallel timelines for sharing fishery information.
- Board engagement package includes a cover memo, a detailed technical information package and suite of scenarios reflecting past feedback as a starting point for conversations, with a request for feedback on implementation/implications of each one.
- Summary of 5 potential scenarios reflecting feedback from various sources.
- 2025 Sockeye escapement plan: Building on the 2024 pilot, FSMC JTC reps working with DFO collaboratively to develop options for the draft 2025/26 IFMP, then to support engagement and use feedback to shape final FSMB advice.
- Overview of JTC's Summer 52 technical memo: addresses escapement data/trends, FMI info on fishery impacts, reference fishery, Chilliwack hatchery influence and MSFs

Discussion

- Unusual to see FSC and treaty on the same line as a priority. How will DFO deal with FSC when treaty obligations threaten conservation/FSC? Need 2025 plans that can respond to Chilcotin slide impacts — looks like early stocks were significantly impacted in 2024.
 - FSMB: Will clarify this reference is to treaty domestic (i.e. food fisheries). The FMI management targets would be set pre-season — if there are proposals to allow in-season adjustments, welcome suggestions for how to do that.
 - Given significant risks to important runs, expected ongoing slide impacts, planning should anticipate substantial damage to returning stocks. The task force will continue providing real-time info on risks and threats. But Chinook management needs to change to enable in-season adjustments due to incidents like this.
- Q/A: FSMB has not prescribed specific management measures to achieve potential scenarios. Achieving reductions would probably require extending Chinook non-retention in rec fisheries at least into August. Recent work on fishery release mortalities warrants review of standard mortality rates in use and review of angling practices.
 - Concern that research shared years ago on effects of water conditions on release mortalities has not been integrated into management.

- With warming waters, it's definitely something technical committees are aware of. Fraser Chinook conservation is a key factor constraining commercial fisheries.
- Request that DFO engage IMAT to discuss Summer 52 scenarios and impacts to VI stocks.
 - FSMB: FSMB will review this and other requests to meet.
- How can you guarantee that SFAB will not do end runs around this new mandated process?
 - FSMB: We are trying to provide a more transparent analysis that brings the weight of the Board behind formal advice to the Minister. But in a free/democratic country we can't prevent others communicating with the minister.
 - Encourage FSMB to share the technical info with SFAB.
 - FSMB: This is the intent behind developing and sharing the technical info package.
- Thank FSMB for their work. Concerns about US ramping up fisheries and potential impacts. Also note that info from TNG really impacts our food fisheries.
 - Current PST remains in effect until 2028 and limits what both countries can harvest. Negotiations for new PST are starting, so the new US context could be challenging.
- Many FN communities have not met our FSC needs for many years — we have to buy salmon to feed our people. Troll and rec fisheries impact are impacting us. Why must we wait two years for fishery results? What is DFO hiding? We have to keep coming back every year to say this and DFO never changes management.
 - FSMB: The CMA speaks to the parties exercising their respective authorities and the Board has been working through what that looks like (e.g. role of Board vs Ministerial decisions). The minister has made some decisions, but so has the Board and we continue to work through this. Re FSC commitments, there may be various indicators or ways to assess whether this is being achieved. Proposed scenarios are intended to help us work through implications of proposed changes to different fisheries.
 - JTC: Re info delays, the FMI analysis is a new tool. A major delay is backlogs in lab processing of genetic samples. We are working on ways to speed up reporting. JTC's review also identified some errors to fix and ways to improve reporting.
- FSMC: Concerns include how long it's taking to implement the CMA, continuity and changes in DFO reps to the process. FSMB is grateful for JTC's important work to support Board decisions. I want to see this process succeed, but once we have played our role, decisions about fisheries in individual territories still need to be made directly by the nations responsible. Once we turn it over to the Minister there is a process that Canada is supposed to follow.
- Request to discuss this further in Tier 1.

2024 Post Season Review | Fraser Sockeye

Adam Keizer, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- Pre-season: Expecting close to lowest Fraser Sockeye return on record.

- Management plan recap: Escapement plan, harvest rules, LAER (Low Abundance Exploitation Rate), TAM (Total Allowable Mortality) caps.
- Pre-season fishery planning: very conservative, no directed fisheries, no Pink fisheries.
- Preliminary post-season estimate of retained catch. DFO acknowledges the extreme hardship imposed on nations by severe conservation restrictions.
 - Harvest impacts were below LAER caps; most were from unauthorized fisheries.
- Environmental conditions influencing Fraser Panel in-season decisions.
- Chilcotin slide: significant impacts on Taseko and Chilko Sockeye. Continuing slide instability; Chilko represents 50% of expected 2025 returns.
- No directed 2024 fisheries apart from authorized retention in two small terminal FSCs.

Discussion

- Q/A: Unauthorized catch is mostly from nations in the mid-river area.
- Q/A: DFO acknowledged how hard it is for leaders to advise constituents that there is no fishing. DFO does not attribute unauthorized fishing to any particular nation — the reference is just to where the unauthorized fishing occurs. Mitigation is a more complex question. There is a multilateral drought response team and process/tools in place that influence in season management decisions by Fraser Panel.
- The timing/duration of the 2024 Chilcotin slide particularly affected early returning stocks, including Taseko (only a couple hundred came back) and the south end of Chilko. So it's important that DFO carefully consider this context for 2025 management. There will very likely be new impacts in 2025 due to continued slope instability, so important to maintain monitoring in 2025 to provide the best possible and timely information. Also stress the importance of recognizing that Chilko represents ~50% of the expected 2025 return.
 - TNG responded to the slide within hours and led establishment of a task force to link and support communication between various responsible entities, including DFO, the Province, UFFCA and Big Bar experts. TNG will be present an update to the PSC First Nations Caucus in coming weeks, which will be available online.
 - Link to TNG reports: <https://tsilhqotin.ca/our-territory/fisheries/communications/>
- We recognize how challenging it is to address unauthorized fishing in our communities, especially when we see relatives in need and trying to balance that against serious conservation concerns. Having said that, 25,000 Sockeye seems like a very high amount, given the serious conservation concerns. Applaud all those who are sacrificing to support conservation, but if there is anything we can do to support communities in need to reduce these impacts, it would be helpful to know.
 - DFO: It's not just about accessing fish, but about maintaining traditional practice for these communities. Education and communication are very important, and FSMB has supported this with letters to all nations for the last two years. It's important that communities hear these messages from others, not just DFO. We understand how difficult it is for leaders to share these messages with communities in need.

- FSMB's indigenous reps have worked to communicate the importance of respecting conservation measures. The Chilcotin slide also affected many other salmon populations, due to extensive silting downstream.
- DFO has eroded our access to Chinook (Area H troll) and reallocated to the rec sector, so we are not responsible. We just hear the same thing every year and nothing changes.
 - DFO: Need to be clear that DFO cannot control fish, just the people who are fishing for them. DFO confirms that troll was not a source of Sockeye mortality in 2024.
 - DFO: Note that other sources of unauthorized catch numbers include C&P reports from rec checks, and unattended nets occasionally seen downstream.

2025 Management Approach

Mike Hawkshaw, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- Key planning considerations; FN role in fishery planning.
- 2025 IFMP consultation timeline.
- Canadian Chinook management objectives; 2025 key drivers, Initial planning considerations include FSMB work on Summer 52s — significant driver of Southern Chinook management.
 - Advice welcomed re other stocks to consider, suggestions for longer-term work.
- Fraser Sockeye and Pink: Harvestable surpluses and full communal fisheries expected, barring unfavourable developments.
 - Advice sought on the key management measures to be considered.
- Chum: 2024 management shift based on past consultations (started season with all fisheries closed until abundance confirmed).
 - 2021 brood year was poor but modest improvement in 2025 outlook. No major management changes planned for 2025.
- 2024 Interior Fraser Steelhead: preliminary spawning escapement estimates for Thompson (536) and Chilcotin (198); no management changes expected for 2025.
- Southern BC Coho: IFR Coho remains in Low status and is the main constraint to Coho fisheries. No consensus in 2024 to move away from current conservative management.

Discussion

- Q/A: Preliminary Outlook categories 2-3 for SC Chum are in the mid-range (2 is below average, 3 is near average) so it raises questions about how to start the season (closed again, or open with reduced limits).
- Q/A: Re Coho, the intended approach is to work with First Nations and to have two CSAS processes, one to summarize available info, the second to discuss a planning tool for domestic management. Once that is peer reviewed and we take it through consultations, we will be better placed to evaluate all fisheries and potential impacts of changes. We've heard clearly that many First Nations have not fished Coho for decades and we want to develop new tools collaboratively to help address that.

- Q/A: Re Chum management, the intent would be that commercial and rec fisheries open at the same time, or if commercial fisheries are to open, we could open rec with restrictions — but these options will be consulted on. Re SRKW, a suite of measures (time and area closures) are in place, with current consultations on those.
 - Why would DFO jump start the rec fishery over commercial when there is also a large Sockeye fishery in place?
 - DFO: Agree we will need to consider impacts on non-target species. The difference is most rec fisheries are typically open unless closed.
- 2021 saw the largest Steelhead return to the Coldwater (over 12K) but the atmospheric river wiped out all the eggs and then there was highway construction. Is DFO regulating industrial activity, e.g. mining, ranching, to ensure adequate flows in the Coldwater River? Inadequate regulation and enforcement encourages people to think it doesn't matter. Is DFO working collaboratively with the Province to ensure sufficient water for fish?
 - DFO: Acknowledge these very important points about environmental uncertainty, importance of a precautionary approach, not reacting too quickly to increases.
 - DFO: Regulating water flows, licences and extraction is under Provincial jurisdiction, although DFO does have some role where fish impacts are involved.
- It's hard to hear DFO talking about Chum and collaboration vs what actually happens in practice. We have good conversations in these rooms but we're not seeing indigenous knowledge integrated in management and nations only get a small share of Chum harvest.
 - DFO: Appreciate the comments. 2024 Fraser Chum returns were better than expected, but acknowledge these other problems that we need to work on together.
- Concern that impacts from 2021 floods that scoured Steelhead spawning beds may not be considered in the 2025 outlook. The petition re SRKW emergency listing should have been noted, as this could impact fisheries management.
 - DFO can speak further to the SRKW issue in future presentations. Acknowledge the important note re potential impacts of 2021 flooding. Pre-season forecasts are useful, but in season, we must be ready to adjust to in-season information.
- We need to address IFMP reform. Concern that the IFMP structure keeps DFO on a fixed course that excludes First Nations' traditional knowledge, values, rights and priorities, and that does not allow us to respond to meaningfully reverse stock declines.
 - DFO: Staff acknowledge and share the frustrations. We can't fix things overnight, and broader higher-level changes needs to happen, through new processes like FSMB and FRRAs, although these will take time.
 - DFO: Canada approved a 2023 action plan to implement our UNDRIP commitments. As government reps, we work within a world of regulations and policies that we are obliged to follow and changes are needed to support action plan implementation.
- We face the possibility that Coho status will be raised to Moderate after many years of restrictions. This presents an opportunity to change fisheries management but no one has approached us yet to explore this. FNs manage fisheries into the future, instead of on an annual basis. We could reach consensus on a long term approach founded on sustainable

FN management principles. Meanwhile we oppose any increase in rec Coho, especially after the catch data shared yesterday.

- DFO: If we consider any increases, it would be for First Nations, not rec fisheries. We've been under the same regime since 1997, so agree this presents an opportunity to establish a new approach. The intent is to develop new tools collaboratively with Nations via CSAS and to avoid repeating what happened in 2014/15.

DFO State of the Salmon

Sue Grant, DFO

Presentation highlights included (See PPT for details):

- Globally, in the climate change context, we continue to see more extreme temperatures and events (more extreme, more frequent, greater magnitude). The warm blob/marine heat wave in the NE Pacific that was first observed in 2013 is still around.
- Life histories and freshwater/ocean years for salmon returning in 2025.
- Freshwater conditions by year 2020 to 2023. Drought, flooding, wildfires, secondary effects to water equality due to erosion from loss of forest canopy.
- Marine conditions: 2022 to 2025: Layered factors; overall warming trend, El Nino/La Nina.
 - Three recent (cooler) La Nina years have somewhat mitigated the broader warming trend. But even the La Ninas are now warmer than past El Ninos, so are not providing the same boost to salmon productivity as historically.
 - The persistent marine heatwave adds to the above factors to support a shift to the less nutritious zooplankton species responsible for reduced salmon productivity.
 - Above average zooplankton biomass in Georgia Strait in recent years (positive).
- Putting it together produces a mix of survival signals, but overall broadly poorer conditions for fish returning in 2025 compared to 2024.
- Scientists are drafting a paper to try and raise awareness of the alarming changes underway and the need to start planning how to adapt.

Discussion

- How do we mitigate for changes linked to climate change? Allowing more fish to survive increases the chances that they will be able to adapt to climate changes. Can we put a number on how much more is needed?
 - DFO: These are the questions we would encourage people to start exploring.
- Q/A: Agree that science needs to be better integrated into management, breaking down silos to ensure it is imbedded in decision making, given that we are seeing the rate of these changes accelerating. It's very complex but we need to start that dialogue and start thinking collectively about solutions.

- Q/A: Some researchers are working on these questions, i.e. what are the cumulative effects of adding up all these various stressors for juveniles transitioning from freshwater, including potentially increased vulnerability to predation.
- Sue will share any papers she finds on cumulative effects of added stressors on out migrating salmon juveniles. **ACTION**
- We need to think outside the box, work more collaboratively and focus on factors we can control, such as water management and adaptive measures to support migration and spawning in freshwater.
 - DFO: Agree we need to break down silos, think outside the box, and consider bold actions.
- We have projects in the Sumas/Chilliwack system studying fish passage questions, especially with warmer water. The concern is that DFO management is not helping mitigation, e.g. still permitting significant rec fishing in those situations.
 - DFO: Example cited of joint project in the Babine with Nations to track river temperatures and have those inform management in season. So there are models for doing this collaboratively in Pacific Region. There had been background work for the Babine project, but from drafting to approval, it took only one year to implement.
- We also need to consider competition from significant hatchery production at sea, in addition to the freshwater challenges they face when they return. We recognize that everyone needs to eat, but we need to work with SEP and others producing hatchery fish globally.
- Appreciate the presentation. Propose sharing this with the Nicola Valley ecosystem restoration project. Also hope DFO uses this information in their management going forward.
 - DFO: Agree that North Pacific hatchery production is exacerbating problems linked to climate change. Excellent comments heard today, highlighting the need to work together, so welcome ideas on breaking down silos and working more collaboratively.

Day 2, Tier 1

- In Camera

Day 3, Tier 2

Welcome

Nick welcomed everyone and set the context for Day 3, referencing the importance of Victor's comments yesterday re unauthorized fisheries and of being able to see both sides of these complex issues. Both sides being able to see each other is critical to success in working collaboratively, so it's important to understand how the legacy of colonialism has painted First Nations and how references to unauthorized fisheries, for example, feeds into such harmful stereotypes. Public education and social media campaigns can change the negative spotlight.

DFO reps thanked the host nation for the previous night's event, including the songs and dancing as well as the stories explaining the background and personal experiences that inspired them, which is valuable learning for non-indigenous partners.

What We Heard

Robin Hawes & Greg Witzky, Forum Co-Chairs

Highlights of the DFO and FSMC presentation summarizing key messages heard on Day 1 and 2 included (See PPT for details):

- Overarching topics and proposed next steps, including steps to address DFO staff participation, ongoing SAP review exploring priority concerns, inviting BC to discuss Steelhead, and the need to update policies and practices as new research comes in.
- Forum renewal, process: Need for professional AV, funding for Forum Renewal, clarifying Forum intent, proposed future agenda topics.
- Fraser Chinook: Concerns about marine rec impacts/respecting FSC priority, values, rights, traditions and roles in managing fisheries in their territories; request to break-out reporting on OK Chinook, explore reasons for stronger Summer 41 return. Next steps include pending FSMB/JTC Chinook technical package.
- ECVI MSFs: Many questions and concerns about impacts, conservation and MSF management framework. Next steps include proposed Stock Assessment presentation, follow up re showing the Mamalilikulla IPCA boundaries for no fishing on DFO maps, DFO follow up re average 5-year Coho catch.
- Fraser Coho and Chum: Attention to terms like “normal” to describe current management restrictions.
- FSMB - Chinook: Importance of Chinook management being adaptive in season, PST/international context, importance of engagement and communication, timely FMI data, FSMB process issues, concern about slow pace of CMA implementation,
- Sockeye: Concerns about unauthorized catch; importance of FSMB role in supporting conservation, importance of the practice of fishing and of adapting to environmental threats, including in season.
- 2025 Management: Need for IFMP reform, involving FNs from the outset in planned Coho work, interest in more info on Steelhead and SRKW management; also priority concerns re Chum measures.
- State of Salmon: Importance of integrating climate change science into management policies/decisions; focus on factors within our control, think outside the box, break down silos.

Discussion

- Good presentation — it's clear the co-hosts were listening, so thanks. This reporting is an important piece that we have asked for in the past. Key concerns include the significant impacts of rec fisheries playing with our food, while many FN communities are going without. We sometimes get passionate at these meetings, but it's not a job for us, and we want to see runs rebuilt, not go extinct, so we can feed our people. There are some signs that give

us hope (example of Okanagan restoration). We may need to rely on hatcheries but we need a say in those and they need to be designed to feed our communities up river.

- Re over-arching topics slide, some language is not appropriate — e.g. nations’ “view” re FSC needs not being met and rec catch infringing priority. These are facts, not views. Re action items, add that the UBC studies must be peer reviewed and implemented in practices. Request for the record that ECVI Salmon Coordinator, not the rec coordinator, present future ECVI reports. The coordinator was online during the presentation and should be presenting at all forum meetings.
 - Agree that wording of priority concerns should be firmed up. Re unauthorized fisheries, clarify there are other sources. DFO must provide resources to ensure the proposed actions are implemented. Thanks to Sam for capturing our concerns.
- DFO has not responded to previous requests for a breakdown of PSSI spending.
 - **ACTION:** DFO agreed to look into what is available to provide regarding PSSI funding/spending breakdown.
- Reiterate that no fisheries can take place in our territory (sport, commercial or FSC, any species) without a management plan submitted to our band office for approval. Also need to utilize our guardians to provide information on what happens in our territory. We don’t want to just talk to AAAs. This is what we mean by UNDRIP implementation, but I didn’t see that reflected in the WWH. Echo earlier comments about our pride in the knowledge and expertise of our young biologists.
 - Important to ensure our key messages are heard, including re DFO consulting directly with nations.
 - Detailed meeting record captures these messages in more detail. It will be important to work through how some of those complex issues will be acted upon.
- Forum purpose has been challenging, especially DFO’s past focus on trying to force consensus amongst nations, which is very challenging. FSMC is bringing some clarity to that, but more clarity is need on the work that DFO and other bodies are doing, initiatives (PST, PSSI, FSMC) and how those are all linked. It’s very complex and it needs to be clearer where we fit in, so bring us some org charts. First Nations need to be part of the work, including clarifying linkages between ourselves. Lower Fraser has been trying to pursue a collaborative agreement with DFO, but DFO said there is no money. So we have negotiated a MoU with FSMC and encourage other FN bodies to do the same. We can’t just focus on Lower Fraser tables because what happens there is affected by other tables that go right up to the international tables.
- DFO: Note that this is a joint DFO and FSMC presentation, while acknowledging comments about the need for improvement. Propose follow up re where best to discuss the SRKW issues. Also seek more clarity on the concern around the ECVI presentation. Was there something wrong with the content?
 - The ECVI PPT was presented by a rec coordinator, not salmon managers, which is not appropriate; it’s about building relationships.
 - DFO: Concern that challenging the legitimacy of an individual DFO presenter does not support relationship building. All DFO staff work together and support each other

to speak for the Department. If there were specific content concerns, welcome more advice on how to improve them.

- Further offline discussion proposed, including via the FPC.
- Propose providing us with an Executive Summary of the meeting notes to compare to the WWH. Concern that focus on SRKW distracts from other major fishery impacts.
 - Explanation of how the independent Forum note-taker supports FSMC and DFO to prepare the WWH. It's very quick overnight turnaround and they add some details missed, while condensing key points to fit a PPT. The intent of this follow up dialogue is to capture missing points or refine wording of the draft WWH PPT which can be seen as a quick first cut, and should perhaps be labelled draft for clarity.
 - Forum Planners to consider proposed Executive Summary and/or other suggestions for improvement.
- Importance stressed of supporting ecosystems and of the Nations' work in their territories to support fish, habitat and systems to support sustainable harvest, including monitoring, enforcement. Our nation's new IPCA will focus on ensuring food for future generations.
- Concern about DFO not valuing commercial fishers, many of whom are First Nations, and not allocating TAC for our fisheries, while supporting unlimited rec fisheries, including people from outside BC who can have priority access over us to catch salmon and other species throughout the coast, all year, for the price of a few dollars for a rec licence. If we apply for a food licence, we are closely monitored, while they can catch as much as they want, often with no monitoring. Our Section 35 rights are being stepped on and many young people will never get the opportunity to fish.
- In closing, Nick proposed that Forum Planners consider following up Tier 2 Forum discussions with bilateral Action Planning meetings (a system that IMAWG introduced and that has been very effective) instead of just identifying action items that may not be followed up.

Day 3, Tier 1

In camera

Adjourned: 12 noon

Participants

Christina Smith	Al Magnan, DFO FSMB
Damon Nowosad, QARS	Adan Keizer, DFO
Kyle Louis, IMAWG	Amy Wakelin, DFO

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Les Antone, FSMC MT	Chris Narver, DFO
Johnny G	Cynthia Breau, DFO
Meg Hull, Sekw'al'was	Barry Zunti, DFO
Michelle Edwards, St'at'imc	Jacob Omajali, DFO
Noah Kussin, LFFA	Jeff Grout, DFO FSMB
Tony Malloway, Tzeachten	Heather Braun, DFO
Paul Tate, Ditidaht	Laura Third, DFO
Pete Nicklin, TNG	Lita Gomez, DFO
Randy James, Tsal'alh	Madeline Wanless, DFO
Ray Silvey, commercial fisherman	Dale Michie, DFO
Rebecca Riley, LTC	Nicole Poole, DFO
Reid Bryshun, NNTC	Owen Pankratz, DFO
Shane John, Chawathil	Patricia House, DFO
Stephanie Denault, Nazko	Steve Ratko, DFO
Tyler Hanson, Ehattersaht	Sukriti Khanna, DFO
Chief Sid Scotchman	Sheldon Romaine, DFO
Kaden Hook, High Bar FN	Teagan Wardrop, DFO
Chief James Thomas	Thomas Powell, DFO
Dominic Hope, Yale	Zaynah Khan, DFO
Lee Spahan, Coldwater	Stacey Larsen, DFO
Mike Baird, Tsawwassen	Christine Bukta, DFO
Thomas Alexis, FSMB Upper Fraser	Mike Hawkshaw, DFO
Don Simpson, LFFA	Krista Gooderham, DFO
	Mark Frisson, DFO
IN PERSON	
Welcome Prayer, Snuneymuxw	
Kyle Milburn , Atlegay	Jeff Radford, DFO

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Bert Boucher, Mamalilikulla FN	Ingrid, DFO
Nicole Frederickson, IMAWG, JTC	Jorn , DFO
Sonora Thompson, IMAWG, Forum Planning	Robin Hawes, DFO FPC Co-Chair
Kelsey Campbell, JTWG Co-Chair, UFFCA	Colin Schwindt, DFO JTWG Co-Chair
Kira Sawatsky, Sumas	Brittany Jenewein, DFO JTC CO-Chair
John White, Snuneymuxw	Max Veilleux, DFO
Aidan Fisher, JTC Co-Chair	Peter Hall, DFO
Bernette Laliberte, Cowichan	Sheldon Evers, DFO
Nick Coutu, WLFN	Brandon Woods, DFO
Mike Staley, JTC FSMC	
Kim Charlie, Sts'ailes	
? Jackson, Five Nations	
Nathan Lustig, STC	
Marc Labelle, JTC FSMC	
Tony Roberts Jr, FSMB Approach	
Patrice Pellegrin, Titget	
Andrew Mishou, Northern Shuswap	
Pat Matthew, FSMB Mid Fraser	
Oliver Peters, FSMC Main Table	
Fred ?? Councillor	
Victor Isaac, FSMC Main Table	Sylvia Chow, JO Thomas
Harold Davis, NTC	
Stanley Johnson	
Byron Harry	
Brian Gale	
Sydney Harris	Day 2
Ken Malloway, FSMB Lower Fraser	Kent Spencer, DFO

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Tristan Hjorth, Nazko	Kevin Connolly, DFO
Kate Mossett, Malahat	Stacy Larson, DFO
Andy Sherriff, Malahat	Teagan Wardrop, DFO
Kristin Hrapchak, FSMC	Andrea Goruk, DFO
Tina Chestnut, FSMC	ONLINE
Michelle Boshard, FSMC	Jeff Reader, DFO
Dave Feil, FSMC	Karen Burnett, DFO
Sam Brad, Drawing Change	Kory Ryde, DFO
Nick Chowdhury, facilitator	Wade Norman, DFO
Dawn Steele, notes	Sue Grant, DFO