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WS-004

Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance Society Newsletter

November 2007



Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance
UFFCA Update
October 2007

AAROM UPDATE

By Marcel Shepert, UFFCA Facilitator and Pete Nicklin, UFFCA Stock Management Biologist

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There has been a long stretch since the last newsletter update, nonetheless the operation continues to chug along with some notable changes. Before getting into the nature of those changes and the reasons, and before summarizing last year's operations; it is important to acknowledge the continued support from the board of directors, the community fish representatives, the tribal organizations, The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the communities themselves, without their continued support the UFFCA would not exist.

The UFFCA has been in operation since 2004 and incorporated into a formal society in 2005. The organization has been dynamic and continues to change as issues, challenges, and opportunities change. Currently the UFFCA has faced some significant challenges and has turned these challenges into opportunities to do business in a more effective way. It became clear late in the fiscal year last year that changes were needed to the reporting structure and the overall administration structure to speed up its funding cycle which has been an extreme hindrance to the cash flow ultimately leading to the UFFCA having to close its doors for over one month.

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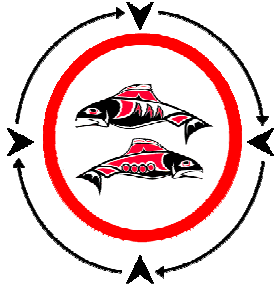
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The UFFCA challenges are being faced by all AAROM groups across Canada, indeed it is a common problem for all organizations trying to develop collective bodies in order to make decision in the future including the sport fishery and the commercial fishery. These challenges are relative to the overall transition all sectors within the fishery are facing, namely the transition from a centralized authority for decision making to devolving decision making authority, a system designed for multi sector decisions making. As with all major paradigm shifts there are and will continue to be challenges.

2006/2007 Program highlights

The 2006/7 year was not necessarily a good one due to a variety of factors including, poor FSC and economic fishing opportunities, continued over fishing on stocks destined to the upper Fraser region

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*A fisheries conservation group serving the
Upper Fraser region since 2001.*

Incorporated 2005.

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Board of Directors

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Tl'azt'en Nation

Bill Shepert

Carrier Sekani Tribal Council

Irvin Gagnon

Lheidli Tenneh Nation

Paul Grinder

Tsilhqotin First Nation

Andrew Meshue

Williams Lake Indian Band

Technical Team

Marcel Shepert

Facilitating Coordinator

Peter Nicklin

Stock Biologist

Brian Toth

Organizational Development Coordinator

Penny Perlotto

Administrative Coordinator

Dr. David Levy, Ph. D

Habitat Biologist

***Letters are welcomed
& encouraged!***

(Early Stuart sockeye, early timed Chinook, Early timed summer run sockeye and Coho to name a few), the perception of reduced consultation with DFO, the AAROM bottle neck within Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC), and lack of movement to transfer more of the salmon fishery to First Nations control.

The UFFCA has successfully implementing the Habitat Trainee program in partnership with the BC Capacity Initiative (BCCI). Two habitat trainees were hired in November and were inducted into a very intense program with a steep learning curve. Unfortunately, as of April 1, only one trainee is still working, the other moved on due to personal reasons. The UFFCA continues to seek a suitable candidate to fill the vacant position.

A habitat biologist was hired back in October, and is now committed to working up to twelve days per month, with an initial emphasis on curriculum development with the habitat trainees. The habitat biologist is also focusing extensively on the Stuart Lake sockeye situation and has completed the first draft of a, Stuart sockeye stock status report, while continuing to develop habitat indicators for aquatic species.

The Community Fish Representative (CFR) Program

The UFFCA also continued with the Community Fisheries Representative (CFR) program; which is designed to build a link to each of the participating communities and the UFFCA. Each community fish representative is responsible for providing monthly reports to the UFFCA. As of the end of the last fiscal year, March 31, 2007, the CFR program has demonstrated mixed results and will need attention in the new fiscal if it is to live up to it's original expectation. The UFFCA continues to receive monthly reports from the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, the Tsilhqotin National Government, and the independent bands in the region including: Tl'azt'en, Williams Lake Band, Lheidli Tenneh, Soda Creek Band, Dog Creek Band, and Canim Lake Band.

The main function of the CFR program was to act as a liaison between the UFFCA and the individual bands and tribal councils. The CFR's have attended all meetings of the UFFCA, and have done a reasonable job disseminating information to the communities; however, the main problem is capacity and commitment. The communities seem to lack the necessary capacity to find the appropriate people for the job, originally envisioned by the board of directors. In order to better meet the needs of the program, an online computer based reporting structure and data base were developed, a training program was also completed; the goal was to get the computer skill level up in order to make the reporting easier to do. A lot of time is still spent reviewing reports, following up to ensure reporting is done appropriately, and trying to get them in on time. While these challenges are significant the overall purpose and support for the CFR program is

still strong. The Community Fisheries Representative (CFR) program will be continued with the hope that the reporting will improve as will the web based data base format, which is close to meeting the needs of the program and will be refined continuously as needs change.

Restructuring

The board of directors has continued to meet and refine strategies for improving the overall operations of the UFFCA. Concurrence has been reached amongst the board to amend this years AAROM agreement, which will identify resources to deal specifically with organizational development including but not limited to, internal and external reporting, accountability, and policy development. In addition, the board of directors has identified a need to build support and understanding for the organizations stated goals and objectives and this can only be accomplished with a clear set of objectives designed to bring together the UFFCA and the interest it represents and the First Nations they affect.

The UFFCA has not assigned any resources to training and development or economic fisheries because organizational development and subsequent personnel issues are of paramount importance at this time.

As stated earlier, the first quarter was difficult due to the financial situation, i.e. lack of resources needed to maintain the operations of the organization. The financial situation is a combination of factors which include things like, AAROM being a relatively new program which is still developing operational policies and procedures for reporting, inter agency communication, both from First Nations and from DFO; finally, it appears that there is a lack of understanding of the reporting requirements between the parties, combined with a slow turn-around time at the Regional and Ottawa level. The multi tiered review process including BC region, and Ottawa, seems to slow the business transaction process considerably and First Nations must be ready to support greater DFO to increase it's internal capacity to handle the back log.

The UFFCA continues to pursue habitat mentoring, stock assessment activities, science, fisheries management, environmental monitoring (as it relates to fish ecology), mountain pine beetle epidemic, sturgeon and where possible other fresh water species.

Priority information gaps including those for human resources and specific targeted segments have been identified for redress within each of the geographical subunits. The addition of a facilitator to the UFFCA organization will help draw connections between nations, and begin building partnerships in order to minimize duplication of services, and develop human resources to meet future demand. There are enough resources available but access must be coordinated and strategic.

Conclusion

The board of directors have decided to break the ED position into two new pieces, Facilitator, and Administrative Coordinator, also to hire an Organizational Development consultant to assist the organization by creating better internal and external reporting, and structuring the organization to address issues like, economic development, policy, training and development.

For the remainder of the fiscal year the UFFCA, AAROM objectives include: increased print and distribution of media material (newsletter, web site, information kits, and special information pieces as they evolve), updating the Strategic Plan by involving participating communities in the development and implementation of the Plan, creating better presentation(s) for use at initial public meetings, increased community meetings, ongoing negotiations with DFO re: long-term AAROM agreement, promotion of the stated goals and objectives of the UFFCA and seeking support from each UFFCA communities, refinement of the work plan for the contractors and gov-

ernance structure, strategic direction and implementation of terminal economic fisheries, collaboration with DFO to implement the Wild Salmon Policy (conservation units, upper and lower bench marks), development consultation protocol, and finally to seek an effective way to participate in the development of the inter-tribal treaty process for Fraser First Nations including interface with other AAROM bodies.

While this year did not get off to a good start due to the cash flow, the future is bright with the addition of new positions designed to better meet the needs of the organization. The UFFCA is now in its fourth year of operations and has established a good working relationship which will get better with time.

UFFCA Board of Directors Profile—Irvin Gagnon

My name is Irvin Gagnon, my friends call me Chucker, and I have been the Fisheries Technician for the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation for 12 consecutive years. I live with my partner Deryl Lynn Seymour for 20 years on the Lheidli T'enneh reserve. I have two brilliant children, Nathan 7 years old and Samantha 10. I am a dedicated individual who is willing to work hard and adjust easily to the tasks at hand.

During my twelve years I have worked on various projects including: Stream inventory, environmental monitoring, inventories, Chinook and Sockeye numeration. I have constructed, maintained, and operated two fish wheels for the Lheidli T'enneh nation in the Fraser River. I assisted the training for the crew that maintained the fish wheel. Over the years I have conducted test fisheries, sturgeon and burbot studies. The past year I have returned to school and have successfully completed my computer training at the Best centre in Prince George, British Columbia and obtained my environmental monitor certificate from the College of Malaspina.



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~UFFCA Upcoming Events~

November 2007

November 7-8: IHPC—Vancouver
 November 15: UFFCA General Meeting—Prince George
 November 27-28: AAROM—National Policy Planning Group
 November 28: Inter Tribal Treaty Meeting—Kamloops

December 2007

December 5: Mountain Pine Beetle W/S—Prince George
 December 13: UFFCA General Meeting—Prince George
 December 14: UFFCA Bi-Lateral Meeting—Prince George