

THE WATER-SHED SOURCE

WS-005

January 2008

Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance



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The UFFCA heads into the final quarter of the 2007/8 fiscal year, which is typically the most intense part of the year due to the housekeeping issues that typically start to compound toward the end of the year. DFO is also doing a good job keeping us busy with a steady stream of consultations pertaining to such noteworthy issues as PICFI, AAROM, 2008 management planning, etc. The sheer volume of meetings is overwhelming and all-consuming; however, with a focused work plan the UFFCA is ready to meet the challenge head on.

Until March 31 the UFFCA's contractors will be primarily engaged in five key areas:

1. Early timed Chinook conservation measures
2. Stuart River sockeye stock status report and the subsequent media release
3. PICFI implementation
4. Fraser River First Nations FSC sharing arrangements and Inter-Tribal Treaty process
5. A proposed two day,

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Environmental workshop. Of course there are other issues like planning for next year, but the primary focus will be in these issues. Make no bones about it, these five issues



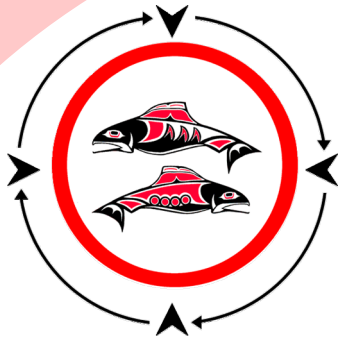
are going to be big and will require all of our collective focus if we want to be effective. With respect to the DFO sub-regional meetings and 2008 FSC sharing arrangements, the UFFCA must focus on strategically responding to the issues and expressing a clear minimum of consultation and accommodation measures expected. UFFCA area First Nations have the most to lose from a poorly designed sharing arrangement.

The remainder of this newsletter will break each of the five issues into more detail and expand on the UFFCA positions developed to date. As a reminder, the UFFCA is an

organization which develops and implements cooperative management for the protection of fish species and their ecosystems, by taking an integrated approach to management with federal and provincial governments, and where appropriate other parties with an interest in fish. Our job is to coordinate funding to support the group's initiatives, and make better use of resources available,

and to eliminate funding competition (where possible) amongst the UFFCA parties. Most importantly, the UFFCA should benefit Aboriginal organizations by identifying and developing strategies to better communicate minimum consultation and accommodation requirements when any governments may directly or indirectly consider actions that may infringe upon established or potential rights.

“Our job is an important component of a series of processes that occur at different levels, all of which combine to provide a well-rounded picture of Upper Fraser First Nation views on fisheries



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“The Fraser River and the salmon is the legacy our forefathers have left us, just as it was their legacy from their fathers”

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issues, but it is not good enough to just identify the issues, it is important to take it to the next level and that is precisely what we plan to do”

Earliest-timed Chinook conservation measures: Current DFO/UFFCA technical information indicates serious conservation concerns exist in 2008 and beyond with respect to a number of Chinook stocks returning to the upper Fraser area, particularly those categorized as “Earliest-timed Spring Chinook”, including populations originating from the following systems: Upper Chilcotin River, Blackwater/Westroad River, Cottonwood River, Chilako River, and Endako River.

The UFFCA is concerned that stocks returning to its member First Nations Territories are managed respecting the priority rights of UFFCA area First Nations and with a conservative approach recognizing the seriousness of the situation. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has provided a plethora of information supporting the position of the UFFCA; therefore, conservation measures need to be considered, including, but not limited to:

1. Manage marine and in-river fisheries in a manner that ensures exploitation of these stocks is ‘0’ or absolutely minimized;
2. If fisheries potentially exploiting these stocks are implemented in 2008, collect and provide information documenting the fishery(s) impacts on these stocks; and,

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3. Provide feedback with respect to DFO’s ability to accommodate these recommendations.

Stuart Sockeye Stock Status Report: After many years and frustrating seasons of poor returns, and after hearing the Elders of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council express their fears about the dwindling sockeye runs in the Stuart River, the UFFCA has led the job of preparing a Stuart sockeye stock status report.

The purpose of this report is to document the current state of the Stuart sockeye runs and to draw a parallel between the current precarious state of the runs to the growing sense of despair, fear, and urgency felt by the Native people in whose territory the Stuart sockeye spawn. As the run continues to decline, so too does the spirit of the people who have relied for millennia on this bounty.

The recommendations contained in the report, coupled with the passion of the Carrier and Sekani people to preserve this species, will lead to the conservation of these sockeye for generations to come. Since the decline became apparent, the Carrier and Sekani people and many others have done their part for conservation to little avail. Others need to step up now and provide their support. Until the Stuart sockeye population recovers to higher levels of abundance, restrictions on fishing should be maintained. But to meet the food needs of the Upper Fraser

First Nations, arrangements should be formalized to import food fish to affected communities. The report indicates that fertilizing Takla Lake on an experimental basis should be considered to aid the recovery of some Early Stuart sockeye, and the DFO should consider this option. Further, in the longer term, more study is needed of juvenile biology and population sizes in Stuart area lakes.

The precarious state of the Stuart sockeye runs parallel to the growing sense of despair, fear, and urgency felt by the Native people in whose territory the Stuart sockeye spawn. The people of this region have a long history with the sockeye based on spiritual values of connectedness and respect, and without the sockeye, their spirits continue to decline. The bottom line for the First Nations in the Upper Fraser is *“Urgent action must be taken.”*

PICFI Implementation: The single most important aspect with respect to PICFI is the participation of First Nations (i.e. the program must be designed and implemented with a sufficient level of First Nations engagement so that it is fair and allows flexibility to utilize all the benefits associated with it). Notwithstanding the fact that the program is mostly targeted toward the “mixed stock” marine commercial fishery and license buy-back programs, which automatically excludes, in-

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land First Nations, does not mean the UFFCA should take a passive approach. **On the contrary, the resources being considered for reallocation under this policy are those to which UFFCA First Nations hold an inherent right. The UFFCA will work towards ensuring UFFCA area First Nations are fully informed about this initiative, and can pursue suitable consultation, accommodation and compensation mechanisms with DFO.** Further, there are other aspects of the policy including capacity building and business planning which are of deep interest to UFFCA members. The key is going to be about the allocation of the funding. The program has a total budget of \$175m, of which \$125m will go toward license buy-back programs, requiring UFFCA First Nations to develop innovative approaches to this opportunity and their future FSC and economic needs in this regard.

Fraser First Nations Inter-tribal Treaty (ITT): The ITT continues to move forward with the last meeting held January 30-31 in Kamloops; the next meeting is scheduled for Prince George sometime in March, 2008. The conferences are designed to explore and strategize the implementation of the Inter-Tribal Fishing Treaty signed on July 27 1989. The premise has always been that fish represent the First Nations in cultural, spiritual and tradi-

tional terms and the aim of these sessions is to work together not as Tribal Councils or Bands, but as Nations throughout British Columbia, coming together to enter into honest and open dialogue with each other, and to take action. The UFFCA members have a critical connection with the salmon, the waters and the land; therefore the treaty is in our best interest. The goal is a short specific strategy – around political and legal issues as well as a community strat-



egy. A strategy that incorporates the spiritual practices with the fish, that the First Nations exercise jurisdiction and sovereignty over the fish. This is a time to rebuild relationships between the Nations, to stand together, and the Inter-Tribal Fishing Treaty is a way that this can be achieved. The conference objective is to bring all Fraser First Nations together to determine how that legacy will be passed on to future generations, and make it firm and clearly understood how it is that the Nations shall work together, Nation to Nation in order to conserve and preserve. A process needs to be established so Fraser First Nations can talk about sharing this once abundant resource,

especially for the next few years including 2008.

“It is imperative to realize that the Fraser River system salmon fishery is not merely an economic resource but a way of life. A way of life over which we have a sacred obligation to defend and uphold. The Fraser River and the salmon is the legacy our forefathers have left us, just as it was their legacy from their fathers.”



Environmental Assessment Workshop:

In the context of the dramatic changes that are currently taking place in, and being proposed for Northern BC, this workshop will evaluate the current provincial and federal Environmental Review (EA) processes from a First Nation perspective. Many First Nations who have participated in environmental assessments have been dissatisfied and do not feel that their concerns and interests have been appropriately considered.

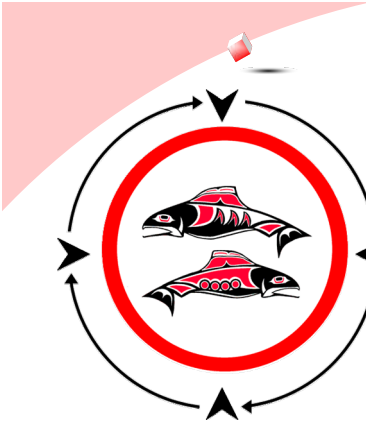
This workshop will bring together First Nations from across northern BC, and aims to develop recommendations for First Nation communities and their leadership, government and industry, outlining what is required to move towards developing an improved EA process that better reflects and protects the interests of First Nations and northern communities.

Given the pace and scale of proposed resource and industrial developments in northern BC, the limitations of this process are becoming magnified. The existing process is not mandated to consider the cumulative impacts of and/or

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

- FEB 18-19: Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Committee (Abbotsford)
- 25-26: DFO/FRAFS sub regional sharing meetings (Surrey)

- MARCH 3-4: Takla Lake information session (Takla Lake)
- 5: DFO/FRAFS sub regional sharing meetings (PG) *
- 6: UFFCA AGA (PG)
- 11: DFO/ FRAFS sub regional sharing meeting (Kamloops)
- 12: DFO/FRAFS sub regional sharing meeting (Lower Fraser River)
- 13: DFO/FRAFS sub regional Sharing meeting (Naniamo)
- 25-26: Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC) (Richmond)
- 26-27: Environmental Assessment Work shop (Prince George)

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multiple projects over larger landscapes, or the impacts of individual and/or multiple projects over larger spatial and temporal scales, and the process's findings are largely reliant upon predictive capabilities. Because of the process's inadequacies with respect to meeting the needs of First Nation communities, the process does not necessarily result in the outcomes desired by government and industry – a social license to proceed with projects, or investment security.

Given the number of proposed developments in northern BC in the foreseeable future, it is time for First Nations to come together to ensure that where developments are being considered in northern BC, the related EA processes are conducted in a manner suiting their needs.

Projected Workshop Outcome: A set of recommendations from northern communities on reforming the EA process



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