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Skeena Watershed Initiative Planning Group  
c/o Katrina Connors  
Manager, Skeena Programs  
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Dear Colleagues:

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT AND SUGGESTED  
ROLE FOR THE SKEENA WATERSHED INITIATIVE**

I would like to thank you for your continued efforts related to salmon in the Skeena watershed. Having spent many years in the Skeena region, I appreciate both the importance and challenges associated with your work. On behalf of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), I also wanted to take this opportunity to re-confirm our support for the Skeena Watershed Initiative (SWI) and outline a number of priorities for the Department that may inform the role and work of the SWI moving forward.

As you know, the conservation and sustainable use of salmon and their habitat is a key priority for DFO, consistent with our mandate and the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP). Consultation and engagement with First Nations and other interests through our existing fisheries management advisory processes remains critical to our management approach. At the same time, the Department is increasingly engaging as a partner in collaborative, multi-interest processes such as the SWI in order to share information, seek advice, develop integrated approaches and better inform our management approach.

In that context, I would highlight a number of DFO priorities with respect to Skeena salmon. This work is designed to move us forward with WSP, as well as other initiatives such as the Sustainable Fisheries Framework, Pacific Fisheries Reform and Marine Stewardship Certification (MSC) Action Plans:

- Over the coming months, DFO will develop a new management plan for Skeena chum. While this work will be lead by DFO and supported through consultations with First Nations and with the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC), we would welcome input and advice from the SWI on the development of this

plan. This work will be informed largely by the completion of a stock status review of Skeena chum salmon in preparation for the DFO Scientific Review Process meeting in November 2010.

- DFO will be initiating discussions regarding the development of an abundance based management plan for Skeena Chinook. Again, this plan will be developed in consultation with First Nations and existing consultative processes there is an opportunity for the SWI to contribute to the plan development. These discussions will be informed by new technical assessments including information available from the 2010 Terrace area creel survey and the Skeena Fisheries Commission-LGL Chinook radio tagging project funded by the Pacific Salmon Commission Northern Fund and the SWI.
- DFO and the Province of BC have indicated the need to review and update the Skeena steelhead objectives and management plan. DFO's intent is to work cooperatively with the Province of BC to jointly move forward on this initiative.
- DFO will continue to engage the SWI and other partners in work related to Strategy 1 of the WSP, including the definition of conservation units (CUs) and benchmarks for CUs, as well as the determination of stock status for CUs. As new information is developed, it will be used to further shape and inform management plans for all salmon species in the Skeena.

Over the longer-term, DFO will be moving forward with integrated planning for Skeena CUs under Strategy 4 of the WSP. As outlined in the Policy, Strategy 4 provides for the development of strategic plans that will incorporate information under Strategies 1-3 and identify: i) long-term biological targets for CUs and groups of CUs; ii) recommendations regarding resource management actions to protect or restore Pacific salmon, their habitats and ecosystems; and iii) timeframes and priorities for actions. If the SWI is supportive of this role and successful in contributing to the initiatives outlined above, DFO would envision a leadership role for the SWI in developing these integrated strategic plans and supporting WSP implementation moving forward.

Should the SWI agree, DFO staff would work with the SWI, its facilitator Ben Hoffman, and other partners such as the Pacific Salmon Foundation to develop a work plan for the SWI consistent with these (and potentially other) priorities.

As you know, technical advice and scientific information will continue to be fundamental to the success of this process. For its part, DFO will continue to bring its range of science and management information and expertise to the table. The Department will also continue to encourage partners including First Nations, the BC Ministry of Environment and others to bring their suite of scientific programs, information, tools and expertise to these discussions. Ongoing collaboration between these groups, as well as the SWI, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and others will continue to be important in terms of identifying information needs and building the science base for management.

While we continue to support and encourage effective participation on the part of First Nations in the SWI and other integrated processes, DFO will continue to respect our obligation and commitment to consult on a bilateral basis with First Nations. In addition, we will continue to seek advice and input through our existing advisory processes for salmon, including the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC).

While we recognize the continued role and importance of these other advisory processes, we feel the SWI represents a unique and significant opportunity to bring together a range of diverse interests in support of the conservation and sustainable use of Skeena salmon and their habitat, for the benefit of all.

Again, my thanks and I look forward to hearing from you regarding this potential role for the SWI and your support in moving forward with these priorities.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Farlinger  
Regional Director General  
Pacific Region

cc: Bonnie Antcliffe, A/Regional Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management  
Mel Kotyk, Area Director, North Coast