

**BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER, FISHERIES  
MANAGEMENT**

(FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

**SUMMARY**

- A briefing on the key policy issues surrounding the development of the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP) was prepared for the Minister.
- This briefing focussed on the most fundamental issue - conservation.
- A briefing on habitat, enhancement and aquaculture is essential to highlight the complexity of these issues and the significant precedent the policy will set for Fisheries Management.
- Definitions of Conservation Units and the decision-making process and slide specific comments follow.

**Background**

- A briefing was prepared for the Minister on the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP). An opportunity to comment on the presentation was offered to the Pacific Region. The comments are presented as follows.

**Analysis / DFO Comment**

**Conservation Units.**

- “What are we trying to conserve?”  
Consideration of this in the Region has been contentious and taken some time to move forward. The WSP Steering Committee recently considered three options, around the question of “What level of diversity should the WSP conserve in order to avoid listings of wild Pacific salmon under the SARA?”. A fourth option

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around historic management was deemed inappropriate and was not considered. The options considered were:

**1. The WSP will conserve diversity of wild salmon at the Designatable Unit (DU) level.**

Under this option, the fishery management planning process will set target harvest rates and harvest strategies that will minimise the possibility of DU's being legally listed by SARA. Assessment programs would likely monitor the status of DU's judged to be at high risk. This option has considerable potential to disrupt current fisheries while affording considerable options for future fisheries and other uses of salmon. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of population structure at least at the DU level.

**2. The WSP will conserve diversity of wild salmon at the DU level, to the extent practicable.**

With this option the WSP conserves diversity at the DU level but will consider socio-economic factors in the management of the resource.

Under this option, the primary purpose of the WSP retains the intent of Option 1 but is tempered by the socio-economic context at the time of the decision. Operationally the result is a suite of measures that attempt to reduce impacts on DU's that are at risk (e.g. temporally or spatially selective fisheries) while allowing for the possibility that these may be insufficient to adequately protect all of the DU's. This approach would likely increase the possibility of loss of some units or decrease the possibilities for recovering or maintaining some of the weakest DUs. Assessment with this approach would extend to the units that were deemed recoverable or maintainable. This option has the potential to be less disruptive than Option 1 on current fisheries, affords less protection to some DU's, and could reduce future options for fisheries and other uses of salmon. Option 2 allows socio-economic factors to be considered while recognizing the intrinsic value of population structure at the DU level. Under this option, a primary purpose of the WSP is still to avoid potential listings under SARA, recognising that SARA enables DU's to be identified to the level of local populations. The difference between Option 2 and 1 is that Option 2 increases the possibility of listings under SARA. This option recognises that once Cabinet receives a list of species from COSEWIC, they have 9 months to review the list. Cabinet has the option of not adding the species to the legal list or it can decide to refer the matter back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration. In this case, the Minister of the Environment is required to issue a statement setting out the reasons for the decision. This allows DFO the opportunity to dispute the appropriateness of listings when they are not considered practicable.

### **3. The conservation of diversity of wild salmon at levels other than DU's.**

The WSP will conserve salmon at levels of diversity established by DFO. This option could provide more flexibility for management than Options 1 and 2 because the units are delineated by DFO. There are numerous possibilities, however there is no agreed upon approach. One option would be the use of ESU's. Another option would be to adopt a different level of relatedness when aggregating populations than used in DU's. For example, populations could be aggregated at genetic levels higher than DU's. Another possibility would be to focus on the conservation of highly productive populations. Whenever diversity is conserved at levels higher than DU's, there will be an increased likelihood of listings and also an increased likelihood that biodiversity would be lost.

- Recognizing that the decision will be subject to ADM approval prior to public consultation, the WSP Steering Committee proposed OPTION 2 and asked that development of the policy continue using this principle.
- **Decision-Making Process**
  - The decision making framework is key. Staff are in the early stages of developing the framework and plan to evaluate a draft at the end of July. They are utilizing many of the key principles identified including risk assessment and risk to develop an open and transparent planning approach that is inclusive of First Nations, stakeholders, NGO's and the public. The process needs to facilitate short and long term planning that is salmon-centric. Objectives for conservation units need to be developed and managed with operational linkages to Fisheries Management, Habitat and Enhancement.
  - It is worth noting that there is considerable potential for overlap with a number of ongoing and emerging initiatives that are all dealing with the management of salmon and reforming or introducing open planning and decision frameworks. Specifically, Improved Decision Making, Watershed-based Fish Sustainability Planning, Objective-based Fisheries Management /IFMP, Canada's Ocean Strategies Integrated Management Framework, SARA Recovery Team Planning, and the Fraser River Spawning Initiative. The WSP team is working with representatives from each initiatives to explore opportunities for joint solutions.

- **Slide specific comments:**

**Slide 2.** Should read “five species of Pacific Salmon in Canada” – there are two other species in Asia.

**Slide 3.** “Larger stocks are more productive” may not necessarily be true. They could be less productive per unit of habitat they depend on but larger because they are utilizing more habitat. It is true that more productive stocks can withstand higher harvest rates.

**Slide 5.** Public comment in 2000 not 2001.

The three principles presented are from a second draft that was revised based on the results of the public consultation. There were six principles in the first draft. The document includes an overarching goal that should be included. The goal is: *Promote the long term viability of Pacific salmon populations in natural surroundings, and fish habitat for all life stages, for the sustainable benefit of the people of Canada.*

word

The work “promote” was “ensure” in the first draft. This was softened on the advice of legal.

The bullet around finalization of the policy indicated that the problem lies in translating the abstract principles to the practical guidelines. While that has been a challenge, work has been bogged down by an inability to resolve the higher level question around “What are we trying to conserve?”

**Slide 7.** The COSEWIC DU’s should be a bullet under the choices bullet.

**Slide 8.** While in general costs can be expected to increase, it may not be a strictly linear increase depending on how we choose to do the implementation.

**Slide 9.** The bullet starting OPTION 3 should read an “alternative” level of biodiversity rather than “appropriate”.

**Slide 11.** It should be clarified whether “resource managers” are DFO resource managers or Resource Managers in general.

**Slide 13.** This is a key point. It would be helpful to provide examples of the deterministic approach to clarify this concern i.e. it was said that we should be reviewing the changes in probabilities of extirpation between alternative management regimes?

**Slide 16.** Overall the team is headed towards delivering a recommended approach. Although in the end it will more likely to be a combination of the two. The options will be around the decision making framework. Rather than setting up polarized debate on whether we should have enhancement or aquaculture etc, can we agree on a process for managing risks to wild salmon.

**Recommendation / Next Steps**

- The Wild Salmon Policy Steering Committee is meeting on ~~July~~<sup>August</sup> 23, 2003 and would like to invite the Assistant Deputy Ministers of Fisheries Management and Science to attend.

Given the complexity of this issue, & the significant precedent it will set for fisheries management generally, it may be opportune to suggest to the Minister a briefing on these other issues at a future date.

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I concur

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