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Forum on Conservation and Harvest Planning (Forum)

INTRODUCTION

The Forum had its origins in 2007 when DFO attempted to conduct an in-season conference call with Fraser First Nations to try to make decisions about how First Nations could share a limited harvest of sockeye. In early 2008, DFO sponsored a meeting (the first Forum) to begin discussions with First Nations regarding the development of a sharing arrangement between/among First Nations in the Fraser River and marine approach areas. While no such formal arrangement has yet been made, the Forum meetings have evolved since early 2008 into a fairly well accepted format that provides for First Nations meeting among themselves, and with DFO, to discuss management plans and potential issues for each fishing season, primarily for Fraser sockeye and chinook. The purpose of the Forum meetings has never been explicitly defined and agreed upon by its participants. Nevertheless, all participants have seen some value in the Forum meetings to date.

The Forum was initially guided by an informal steering committee called the Fraser River and Approach Working Group. The Forum meetings are now being planned by a smaller more efficient group called the Forum Planning Committee (see accompanying TORs).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose

The Forum meetings comprise the first two steps in what should be a multi-step consultation process about DFO's stock and harvest management plans that could potentially affect the exercise of aboriginal fishing rights. (The completion of a full consultation and accommodation process would occur at a Nation level or more local level depending on the nature and scope of the potential infringement, and would involve more steps in the process.) The purpose of the Forum is:

- To provide a venue for DFO to present to a wide range of First Nations information on the previous year's fishery; and information on the status or outlook for Fraser River salmon stocks, and potential management plans for the coming fishing season for those stocks;
- To provide a venue for a wide range of First Nation participants to discuss among themselves their perspectives on the information presented by DFO; and
- To provide an opportunity to express First Nations' perspectives (consensus where possible) on management plans for those stocks for the upcoming fishing season.

2. Composition

Forum meeting participants are expected to consist of appropriate DFO staff members, and technical and political representatives from First Nations throughout the Fraser River watershed and the marine approach areas who have an interest in Fraser River salmon.

3. Process

- Generally, four meetings are held each fiscal year; the meetings can be of varying length but not usually more than three days per meeting.
- Provision for both Tier 2 and Tier 1 sessions at each meeting.

- Proposed agendas for each meeting are discussed and circulated to potential participants by the Forum Planning Committee through the Secretariat; and meeting format/agenda items are finalized after input from potential participants.