

Management guidelines to address FSC sharing arrangements for Fraser sockeye when Total Allowable Catch does not meet FSC harvest targets.

Introduction

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is responsible for the conservation and protection of Canada's marine resources, including Fraser River sockeye salmon. Under the Wild Salmon Policy, this responsibility mandates the government to maintain healthy salmon populations and their habitats while managing fisheries for sustainable benefits. To achieve these objectives, DFO places the highest priority for the use of wild salmon on conservation, followed by First Nations' fishing for food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) purposes.

Every year, prior to the sockeye season, FSC communal licence harvest targets ("FSC targets") for Fraser sockeye are included in the South Coast Salmon IFMP for marine and Fraser River First Nations. In most years, fisheries are managed in-season to provide opportunities for all First Nations to achieve communal licence harvest targets. However, if in-season assessments of sockeye run-size are lower than forecast pre-season, the situation could arise where the number of harvestable sockeye is insufficient to meet FSC targets. In this circumstance, DFO must still manage to achieve escapement objectives, and consequently, must reduce the harvestable surplus available for FSC fisheries. Due to much lower than expected returns of Fraser sockeye we are now in a position of little or no allowable harvest. The issue that must then be resolved is how to equitably share any potential FSC harvest opportunities among First Nations, especially for groups with differential access to the resource.

This document outlines DFO's 2009 approach to sharing limited sockeye harvesting opportunities among First Nations in the specific circumstance where the First Nations FSC targets cannot be met due to a lack of abundance of sockeye in-season.

In-season Calculation of First Nations FSC Shares

Harvestable surpluses of Fraser River sockeye stocks are determined by DFO staff and the Fraser River Panel based on in-season information on abundance, test fishing catches, environmental conditions and escapement targets provided by Canada. Under the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Total Allowable Harvest (TAC) for sharing with the United States is equal to the total run size less the escapement target, management adjustment, test fishing catch and the Fraser River Aboriginal Fishery Exemption. The United States is entitled to 16.5% of the TAC, and the remaining 83.5% goes to Canada. The amount of sockeye harvestable in Canada is equal to the Canadian TAC plus the Fraser River "Aboriginal Exemption". The Aboriginal Exemption is an amount of 400,000 sockeye negotiated under the Treaty to provide priority harvest to both in-river and marine area First Nations. However, the total pre-season FSC target for all First Nations typically exceeds the amount provided for Aboriginal Exemption under the Treaty. Any FSC target amount in excess of 400,000 is therefore taken from the Canadian TAC prior to sharing the remainder between the commercial and recreational sectors. The Aboriginal Exemption is apportioned among the four run-timing groups according to the Treaty with a maximum of 80,000 fish for Early Stuart and the remaining amount spread over the Early Summer, Summer and Late run timing groups according to the average Fraser River FN harvest on the three previous cycle lines. For planning purposes, the remaining FSC target in excess of the Fraser River Aboriginal Exemption is spread across each run-timing group based on their relative

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abundance while taking into consideration conservation concerns and First Nations' preferences for certain stocks or run-timing groups. An example of these calculations is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-season example of TAC Calculations Used to Apportion FSC Harvest Across Run-Timing Groups

	Early Stuart	Summer	Summer	Lates (incl. BK)	Total
Run Size	165,000	739,000	8,677,000	907,000	10,488,000
Total Deductions	259,700	458,400	3,863,800	612,900	5,194,800
Escapement Target	156,000	295,600	3,470,800	592,000	4,514,400
Management Adjustments	92,000	124,200	-	-	216,200
F.R. Aboriginal Fish. Exemption	10,000	30,600	342,600	16,800	400,000
PSC test fishing	1,700	8,000	50,400	4,100	64,200
TAC for U.S. - Canada share allocation	-	280,600	4,813,200	294,100	5,387,900
U.S. share of TAC	-	46,299	794,178	48,527	889,004
Canadian share of TAC	-	264,901	4,361,622	262,374	4,888,897
FSC Target for all FNs					
Fraser River Aboriginal Exemption	10,000	30,600	342,600	16,800	400,000
FSC portion of TAC	-	48,800	516,700	33,700	599,200
Remaining Canadian TAC (Comm'l + Rec)	(10,000)	185,501	3,502,322	211,874	3,889,697

These calculations are updated throughout the in-season management process by the Fraser River Panel and DFO staff as information on abundance, timing, management adjustments, and escapement targets is updated. When the Canadian TAC plus the Fraser River Aboriginal Exemption exceeds the pre-season FSC target, FSC fisheries are opened as planned. In this situation, the in-season estimate of the total FSC target for all First Nations is equal to the pre-season FSC target. However, if the in-season estimate of the Canadian TAC plus the Fraser River Aboriginal Exemption is less than the total pre-season FSC target for all First Nations, then the limited available harvest must be shared among First Nations groups. This is the situation in which the in-season FSC target would be less than the pre-season FSC target, and this scenario is one of the subjects of this paper. Specifically for 2009 we are in the current position of too few Fraser sockeye to meet the FSC needs for First Nations in-season.

Proposed Sharing Methods

With the exception of Early Stuart sockeye, there is currently no arrangement to apportion the pre-season FSC targets among individual First Nations for each run-timing group. In other words, although the total FSC target is split into the four run-timing groups for planning purposes, there are no allocation agreements in place to apportion fish from a specific run-timing group among individual First Nations groups. The Department is proposing that any remaining FSC target assigned to the other three run-timing groups will be combined for the purposes of apportioning among individual First Nations groups.

Early Summers, Summers, Lates

In the event that a harvestable surplus is identified DFO proposes that FSC targets for First Nations in each of the three areas of Marine, Lower Frasaer and BC Interior groups be adjusted to reflect the proportional reduction of the total pre-season FSC target to the total in-season FSC target. For example, if the total pre-season FSC target is 1,009,000 sockeye, and the in-season FSC TAC is only 745,000, this represents about a 25% reduction in the total FSC TAC. DFO's proposal is to apply this 25% reduction to all individual First Nations FSC communal licence harvest targets. An example of this arrangement, using the pre-season FSC targets from 2008, is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Proposed sharing arrangement for in-season reductions in Total FSC targets

First Nations Group	pre-season calculations		in-season calculations*	
	FSC Target	% of total target	FSC Target	% of total target
Total	999,226		139,400	
Tsawassen FN**	15,226		1,394	
subtotal	984,000	100%	138,006	100%
Marine	260,000	26%	36,300	26%
Lower Fraser	424,000	43%	59,200	43%
BC Interior	300,000	30%	41,900	30%

* based on a theoretical Canadian TAC of 100,000 Summers + Birkenhead sockeye & 90p forecast of Late Run (excl. Birkenhead)

** FSC numbers from Tsawwassen Treaty

Everyone needs to be aware that run sizes can change in-season and adjustments in the total FSC target will change accordingly.