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Pacific Region
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December 8, 2008

Dear Participant:

**Subject: Fraser River Sockeye Spawning Initiative /
Wild Salmon Policy Pilot**

Background

The Fraser River Sockeye Spawning Initiative (FRSSI) has been a 6-year process to develop new guidelines for setting annual escapement and exploitation targets for Fraser sockeye stocks. In 2003 Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) committed to reviewing the rebuilding plan which had been in place since 1987, and established a collaborative planning process for incorporating new information and emerging policies.

The technical groundwork was laid through the development of a simulation model which was refined over three years and six workshops, leading up to an intensive two-year planning exercise that merged the FRSSI model into a pilot implementation of the integrated management processes envisioned under the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP). This combined approach was the logical next step in determining an integrated escapement and harvest strategy for Fraser River sockeye while implementing the WSP and responding to the 2002 Ministerial review of Fraser River sockeye fisheries.

The Spawning Initiative unfolded as a test case for DFO's vision of regional planning through sustained and well-documented public involvement. The initiative brought together diverse interests in an intense and sustained collaborative process to ensure that biological, social, and economic considerations were incorporated in every step of development. The Wild Salmon Policy (WSP) provided a roadmap for the integrated planning process.

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Timeline

The Spawning Initiative had 4 distinct phases:

- *Initial development (2003-2005)*: The groundwork was laid through a series of six workshops in which stakeholders and experts reviewed the technical analyses, provided guidance for incremental refinement of the simulation model, and shaped the communications materials for broader consultation.
- *WSP implementation pilot (2006)*: A series of 3 workshops started off the 2006 pre-season planning process and brought escapement planning into the broader context of WSP implementation. The workshops were designed to test the decision process outlined in the WSP as well as the analytical tools developed during the first phase of the initiative. Workshop recommendations were vetted through internal review and public consultation, leading up to the first implementation of new escapement guidelines based on target levels of total mortality.
- *Preferences and trade-offs (2007)*: A second series of 3 workshops took place during the spring of 2007. Technical revisions identified during the 2006 pilot had been incorporated into the FRSSI model and these workshops were designed around a structured planning exercise focused on capturing participants' preferences and exploring trade-offs among alternative escapement strategies.
- *Operational Challenges (2008)*: The planning process for 2008 was streamlined, building on the progress made during the 2007 workshop series. For 2008, a draft set of options was discussed at a workshop in late January, followed by a more technical review session for additional analyses, leading up to the release of the proposed escapement strategy in the draft 2008 IFMP. After pre-season consultations, the final 2008 escapement plan was released in May. The 2008 planning process focused on the challenges of adapting a long-term strategy to the particular circumstances of each year. Small changes in escapement strategy, that have little effect on long-term performance and trade-offs, can have substantial implications for fisheries planning in a given year. Preseason expectations for 2008 created exactly that kind of scenario for Early Summers, which in turn affected the planned harvest pattern for Summers. DFO is exploring guidelines for annual adjustments to the long-term strategy, and considering the appropriate level of flexibility.

A summary report of the initiative is available at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/334450.pdf>. This report describes the collaborative planning process since 2003 and the simulation model.

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Review Process

The 2007-2010 strategic escapement plan subject to on-going reviews through a collaborative process:

- *Annual post-season review*: The performance of each year's escapement strategy will be evaluated in the established advisory processes following each of the next three seasons (2009-2011) to identify any necessary mid-course corrections.
- *Workshops*: DFO will reconvene FRSSI participants annually to review technical developments and discuss alternative strategies for upcoming seasons. One such workshop is planned for January 21 to 22 2009 in preparation for 2009 pre-season planning (see below).
- *Comprehensive review*: A comprehensive review of the Spawning Initiative will be undertaken in the spring of 2011, after a full 4-year cycle of sockeye escapements.

Next Steps

DFO is reconvening FRSSI participants for a 2-day workshop in preparation for 2009 pre-season planning. The goal of the workshop is to develop a refined escapement plan to be brought forward on the pre-season planning consultations. This meeting will be structured similar to the 2008 planning workshop.

The following materials will be circulated in advance of the workshop:

- summary of lessons learned from 2008
- projections for 2009
- draft escapement plan for 2009

Workshop Outline

1) January 22 9:00-4:00

Introductions, meeting goals and objectives, review of 2008 experience

- Review of 2009 projections, introduce proposed escapement plan, begin discussions

2) January 23 9:00-12:00

- Complete review and refinement of escapement plan

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We are looking forward to your continued contribution, and welcome your comments on the proposed approach.

Yours sincerely,

Original signed by

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