



Government of Canada
Fisheries and Oceans

Gouvernement du Canada
Pêches et Océans

MECTS # 2009-502-00125
EKME # 932154
FILE # 4910-02

To: Mme. Claire Dansereau
À: Deputy Minister

Date: **MAY 28 2009**

Subject:
Objet:

**APPROVAL OF THE 2009/2010
INTEGRATED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLANS
FOR SALMON IN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN BC**
(Decision Sought)

Via: D. Bevan, ADM, Fisheries & Aquaculture Management

From: P. Sprout, Regional Director General, Pacific Region

pm

MAY 28 2009

☐ Your Signature
Votre signature

☐ Information

☐ For Comments
Observations

☒ Material for the Minister
Documents pour le Ministre

Remarks: S. Farlinger - Regional Director, Fisheries & Aquaculture Management
Remarques: P. Ryall - Lead, Salmon Team

[Signatures]

MAY 28 2009

DISTRIBUTION

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTER

**APPROVAL OF THE 2009/2010 INTEGRATED FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR SALMON IN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN BC**

(Decision Sought)

SUMMARY

- The Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs) for Pacific Salmon in Southern BC (Attachment 1) and Northern BC (Attachment 2) are attached for your approval. Fishing opportunities for 2009, including demonstration fisheries, are outlined in Attachment 3. These opportunities are based on extensive consultation with commercial, recreational and First Nations harvesters and environmental groups (Attachment 4).
- Many of the management approaches are similar to previous years. Expected low abundance of salmon in many areas will limit available fishing opportunities for commercial fisheries, may reduce recreational fishery harvest success and First Nations food, social and ceremonial (FSC) opportunities. However, larger returns for Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon are expected to improve opportunities in Southern areas compared to 2008.
- You have been previously briefed on potentially contentious issues for 2009 (Attachment 5). These include the management approaches for early-timed (ET) Fraser chinook (Attachment 6) and Skeena salmon and steelhead (Attachment 7).
- Once approved, staff will commence with implementation of fisheries as indicated in the attached plans which will include preparation of communication products.

Background

- Salmon IFMPs for Northern BC and Southern BC are prepared annually, identifying fishing opportunities and constraints (Attachments 1 and 2).

- Draft IFMPs were released March 20, 2009 as the basis for consultations with First Nations Bands and Tribal Councils, the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) and the Commercial Salmon Advisory Board (CSAB). The Department also met with the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC) which included the Marine Conservation Caucus (MCC) representing environmental organizations, as well as representatives of the First Nations and stakeholder groups (Attachment 4).
- As in 2008, the most significant factor for planning for the 2009 season was the reconciling of conservation related objectives for weak stocks and below average salmon abundance in many areas with First Nations FSC requirements and opportunities for commercial and recreational fisheries.
- In summary, fishing opportunities for North Coast areas are expected to be poor to fair (similar to 2008), but somewhat improved in South Coast areas due to expected larger returns of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. Conservation objectives for stocks of concern will constrain opportunities for more abundant stocks and overall below average catches are anticipated.

Analysis / DFO Comment

- For both North and South Coast areas, the focus will be on conservation of weak stocks while providing harvest opportunities where abundance permits. Staff will work with First Nations and the commercial sector to experiment with ways to move forward on Pacific salmon fishery renewal (i.e. demonstration fisheries). Commercial demonstration fisheries are proposed for the same fleets as in 2008 and have strong support from licence holders (Attachment 8). A new demonstration fishery for the Fraser River gillnet fleet to harvest a small number of chinook is also proposed and is supported by the harvest committee and a majority of the fleet. We don't expect strong negative reaction to this proposed approach
- As in 2008, there continues to be broad based support from all sectors at the IHPC for waiving commercial salmon licence fees for those who do not fish in 2009, particularly for the Northern gillnet fleet given reduced exploitation rates planned in the Skeena River. However, any licence fee changes would be considered within a broader context of the nationally led Licence Fee Review.
- New provisions of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) came into effect on January 1, 2009. The most significant change was in the chinook chapter which reduced the catch ceiling for the West Coast of Vancouver Island (WCVI) aggregate abundance based management fishery by 30% from previous levels. Taking into account allocation priorities for First Nations and recreational fisheries, this resulted in a planned harvest reduction of greater than 30% in the West Coast troll fishery (Attachment 9).

- For the North Coast area, stocks will be protected by continued closures (e.g. Rivers Inlet and Smith Inlet) or by a combination of closed areas and non-retention strategies (e.g., to protect northern “coastal” chum stocks in Skeena sockeye fisheries and central coast coho).
 - Skeena River Salmon and Steelhead – The Department consulted on significant changes proposed for Skeena salmon fisheries to protect and rebuild weak salmon (including steelhead) populations in the Skeena River. The IFMP outlines interim decision rules for 2009 fisheries that would substantially reduce exploitation rates in the commercial Skeena River sockeye fishery compared with past years, but consistent with the Report of the Skeena Independent Science Review Panel. Stakeholders remain divided on the proposed approach with some First Nations and ENGO’s arguing for further exploitation rate reductions to protect weaker salmon populations. Commercial harvesters are strongly opposed to this approach as it imposes substantial reductions on commercial harvests and they will demand compensation. There are ongoing consultations (Skeena Watershed Initiative) with all stakeholders to discuss solutions for future years. A separate briefing note will be provided on management options for 2009.
 - Northern Central Coast Coho- Concerns about weak returns for coho have resulted in the proposed closure of central coast fishing areas for the Northern troll fleet; no additional actions in First Nations and recreational fisheries are planned given allocation priorities. These actions are supported by all of these groups. Additional actions may be required in future years.
- For the South Coast areas, many of the management actions proposed to address conservation actions for a range of populations that are not considered controversial include:
 - ET Fraser Chinook (Attachment 6) – The IFMP contains previously approved plans that include closed areas and a harvest ceiling for the west coast chinook troll fishery, recreational fishery restrictions in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Fraser River, and reductions to First Nations FSC fisheries in the Fraser River during the March 2008 to June 2008 period.
 - Spring/Summer (SS) Fraser Chinook – The IFMP outlines new plans to formalize management approaches implemented in 2008. Management actions will be planned based on an in-season assessment of the return of these chinook salmon to the Fraser River. Harvest reductions are primarily targeted on directed recreational fisheries in the Fraser River consistent with allocation priorities.
 - Cultus Lake Sockeye – In order to protect, and as part of the recovery of Cultus Lake sockeye, an exploitation rate ceiling of 20% will continue in 2009 as previously outlined for the 2008 to 2010 period (Attachment 10). This measure is identical to measures implemented in the past two years.

- Lower Georgia Strait Chinook – For 2009, there will be a continuation of the restrictions introduced in 2004 and continued through 2007 given expectations of continued poor marine survival. These measures include voluntary restrictions in terminal and approach areas for First Nations fisheries and size limits and closed/non-retention areas in recreational fisheries. Additional measures are not planned in the West Coast troll fishery given new PST harvest reductions.
- WCVI Chinook– The plan provides for a fixed closing date and increased DNA sampling to monitor a WCVI catch limit in the North Coast chinook troll fishery and length restrictions along a migration corridor and terminal area closures on the west coast of Vancouver Island for the recreational fishery similar to 2008.
- Interior Fraser Coho – A management objective of limiting the Canadian fishery exploitation rate to 3% will continue as in recent years. During May through September when these coho are encountered in southern BC waters, management actions range from non-retention to time and area closures. These measures are similar to past years.
- In the South Coast, expected improved abundances of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon should provide opportunities for South Coast and Fraser River First Nations fisheries to satisfy FSC requirements and for recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.
- Fraser River economic opportunities fisheries are being negotiated with lower Fraser River Bands, according to a mandate presented for your approval (attachment 11), based on a clear separation of fishing and commercial fisheries.
- Although there are increased prospects of a substantial commercial sockeye TAC in 2009, there is little support among LCA First Nations for DFO direction to move to an integrated commercial fishery with clearly defined shares and similar rules.
- Salmonid Enhancement Program production targets will remain similar to last year and are outlined in the IFMPs.

Recommendations / Next Steps

- It is recommended that the 2009/2010 IFMPs for Northern BC and Southern BC, as set out in Attachments 1 and 2 respectively, be approved.
- A communications plan is being developed and specific products will follow.

Claire Dansereau

I concur,
Gail Shea
Minister, Fisheries and Oceans
Attachments (11):

- 1) IFMP Salmon Southern BC - June 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010
- 2) IFMP Salmon Northern BC - June 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010
- 3) Issues Impacting Fishing Opportunities in 2009
- 4) Summary of 2009 Salmon IFMP Consultations

Previously Approved Memorandums:

- 5) 2009-502-00044 2009 Salmon Integrated Fishery Management Plan Development
- 6) 2009-502-00047 2009 Early Timed Fraser River Chinook Management Approach
- 7) 2009-527-00022 Skeena Salmon 2009 Management Plan (Information Memo)
- 8) 2009-009-00218 2009 Commercial Salmon Demonstration Fishery Results
- 9) 2009-506-00013 Update on Stakeholder Consultations on Mitigation Strategy Under the Pacific Salmon Treaty
- 10) 2008-502-00057 2008 Fraser River Sockeye Management and Cultus Management Approach

Memorandums Not Yet Approved:

- 11) 2009-502-00121 Mandate for a 2009 First Nation Integrated Commercial Fishery and Comprehensive Fisheries Agreements in Lower Fraser River
- 12) 2009-527-00030 Skeena Salmon 2009 Management Plan (Decision Memo)

J. Grout / P. Ryall / S. Farlinger / P. Sprout / D. Bevan