

MEMORANDUM FOR THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR FAM

**DECISION GUIDELINES FOR THE RECREATIONAL FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE  
FISHERY**

(Information Only)

**SUMMARY**

- Implementing decision guidelines in advance of the recreational sockeye fishing season will bring transparency to in-season decision making. This will benefit both fishery managers and the recreational fishing community.

**Background**

- Allocation Principle 4 from an Allocation Policy for Pacific Salmon, October 1999 states that after conservation needs are met, and priority access for First Nations is met, recreational anglers will be provided with predictable and stable fishing opportunities for sockeye, pink and chum salmon.
- The following recommendation was made in the review of the 2002 Fraser River sockeye fishery: "It is recommended that consultations be initiated with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board to address concerns regarding the regulation of the recreational fishery, its linkage to the First Nations and commercial fisheries, and possible impediments to the provision of stable and predictable opportunities for the recreational harvest of sockeye."
- The allocation policy states that management activities will allow an orderly expansion of the recreational harvest of sockeye, pink and chum while minimizing the adverse impacts on the commercial fishery. The allocation policy does not explicitly tie recreational and commercial openings, however, the recreational sector is limited to a cap of 5% of the combined recreational and commercial harvest of sockeye averaged over the years 1999-2005.
- In 2005, the SFAB passed a motion requesting that the recreational sockeye fishery off the Fraser River mouth be managed the same as other south coast recreational sockeye fisheries unless there is evidence of Late run sockeye holding in the area.

### **Analysis / DFO Comment**

- The South Coast tidal water sockeye fishery is a low impact fishery in comparison to commercial and First Nations fisheries. Harvest in tidal waters is dependent on fish abundance and is generally in the range of 3 – 7K fish<sup>1</sup>.
- The in-river recreational Fraser sockeye fishery in the area from Mission to Hope is a medium to high impact fishery. Recent harvests have been in the range of 50-120K fish. 2006 anticipated harvest is 200K fish.
- The in-river recreational Fraser sockeye fisheries upstream of Hope are low impact fisheries. Recent harvests have been less than 2K fish. Sockeye angling opportunities in BCI are undertaken in those areas and during those times when a recreational catch monitoring program can be implemented. The cost to implement a recreational catch monitoring program for sockeye during the entire period when First Nation FSC fisheries for sockeye are occurring in the BCI Area is prohibitive.
- Recreational fisheries can be limited by restricting retention, time and area closures, and reduced daily limits.
- The large majority of the recreational catch of Fraser River sockeye occurs upstream of the Sumas River confluence with the Fraser River; resulting in minimal impacts on endangered Cultus Lake sockeye.

### **Existing Decision Guidelines:**

In order to allow for orderly openings and closures given the unique requirements (large number of participants and large geographic area) of the fishery, the Department has committed to the following, subject to conservation concerns:

- 1) Providing the recreational community at least 48 hours notice of a closure to the recreational sockeye fishery. This may not always be possible due to conservation concerns.
- 2) Avoiding implementing closures on weekends or stat holidays (i.e. a closure would come into place Monday at 00:01 not on a Saturday or Sunday).

### **New Decision Guidelines:**

#### **South Coast Marine Waters, Fraser River downstream of Mission and Fraser River above Hope**

These fisheries are viewed as low impact fisheries, therefore, allow sockeye retention in the tidal water recreational sockeye fishery, including the waters off the mouth of the Fraser once local First Nation FSC fisheries are taking place.

- The sockeye retention of fishery in marine waters by the recreational fishery would be permitted unless:

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<sup>1</sup> Pacific Salmon Commission Reports on Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishing Seasons – 2000, 2001 and 2005.

- it is expected that FN FSC needs will not be met; or
- conservation objectives (i.e. exploitation rate limits for Sakinaw, Cultus and Interior Fraser River coho) and sockeye escapement targets established in the IFMP will not be met.

#### **Fraser River Non-tidal Waters (Mission Bridge to Hope Bridge)**

This fishery is viewed as a medium to high impact fishery, therefore allow sockeye retention in the Fraser River from Mission to Hope:

- once in-river FN FSC open times are regularized (i.e. 72 hour set nets); and
- a harvestable surplus for recreational/commercial fisheries is expected.

Close the in-river recreational sockeye fisheries when:

- a change in information leads to the expectation that FN FSC needs will not be met; or
- conservation objectives (i.e. exploitation rate limits for Sakinaw, Cultus and Interior Fraser River coho) and sockeye escapement targets established in the IFMP will not be met.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Implement new decision guidelines