Perspective on Conservation: Outline of presentation

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Context: What is the relevance of the terms "Conservation", "Sustainability" and "Stewardship":

From the Commission's Terms of Reference, the Commissioner is directed:

a) "to conduct the Inquiry with the overall aim of respecting **conservation** of the sockeye salmon stock and encouraging broad cooperation among stakeholders"

b) "to develop recommendations for improving the future **sustainability** of the sockeye salmon fishery"

Many may take issue with the significance or appropriateness of the use of the singular "stock" and "fishery" rather than the plural form of each. Perhaps of more importance is the direction to encourage broad cooperation among stakeholders – which indicates recognition of a variety of perspectives on the objectives of conservation, sustainability and stewardship.

Main themes:

1. **Conservation is part of resource management = "allocating scarce resources to meet competing ends"**
    - The concept of conservation has developed from its early emphasis on sustainable yield of natural resources and preservation of wilderness areas to include preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem function.
    - Nonetheless, humans are part of the ecosystem, and have as much need for and rights to salmon as other predators (bears, seals, eagles, other fish)
    - Human use is mainly directed to supply food needs, as salmon are an excellent quality protein source.
    - "Use" can be broader than taking for consumption, it can include recreational capture and ceremonial purposes.
    - Others may derive value simply from knowing a natural resource exists and is part of a healthy ecosystem.
    - Conservation is ensuring the optimum mix of benefits can be achieved by maintaining the productive potential of the resource base
    - Since not all objectives can be maximized simultaneously, there needs to evaluation of the costs and benefits of alternative management measures to protect the habitat and harvesting of salmon, and an

informed, transparent public choice made the strikes the appropriate trade-off amongst the multiple objectives.

- Some values for Fraser sockeye may be easier to measure or quantify (e.g. the considerable income and employment benefits to communities from commercial harvest, processing and sale of food products derived from Fraser sockeye), while others are not as conducive to evaluation. Nonetheless, efforts are needed to array the impacts on all of the multiple objectives of various management measures in order to permit decision makers to understand fully the nature of the trade-offs involved in their decisions.

2. Conservation is not simply preservation

- If the only objective was maintenance of maximum biodiversity there would be no fisheries.
- The "natural" environment is not fixed in time, it is constantly evolving. Salmon have only been here for 10,000 years or so, and their abundance and distribution have varied, both up and down, significantly during that time period.
- Salmon populations were changing prior to human contact and certainly changed during the term of First Nations residency in response to non-human induced changes in the environment
- Despite intense fishing pressure for the better part of 100 years we still have an very high level of biodiversity
- We cannot "fix in time" the salmon ecosystem. Many environmental changes are outside the scope of human abilities to influence.
- Some larger events (climate change) may have more influence on salmon than our direct management interventions
- There are costs to every management action (either direct, or indirect – lost production for example) and some efforts to "preserve biodiversity" may take scarce resources away from more worthy causes – other environmental issues, health care, education, etc.

3. "Shared" Stewardship

- As a commercial resource harvester who supplies food products to hungry people throughout the world, we need to ensure we have profitable enterprises that can afford to invest in the capital equipment and hire the labour required to supply those products. With the short life cycle of salmon and their incredible productive capacity it makes business sense to invest in ensuring sufficient spawners to maintain and grow the resource. The long term productivity (or "rate of return")

of sockeye exceeds virtually all investors require rate of return, and thus there is a financial incentive to protecting the future of the resource base.

- Stewardship implies shared ownership in the maintenance and development of the resource. In order to encourage stewardship, security of access to a share of the resource is critical. When users are ensured that their conservation efforts will result in fish reaching the spawning grounds (rather than being harvested by another user) there is complete buy-in for conservation. Share-based fisheries are a good example of this approach.
- The experience of the Pacific Salmon Treaty development and structure is an important example of this principle. The history of the disputes and the development of the key treaty principles will be used to demonstrate this point. (See PST Article III below)

Pacific Salmon Treaty:
Article III: Principles
1. With respect to stocks subject to this Treaty, each Party shall conduct its fisheries and its salmon enhancement programs so as to:

(a) prevent overfishing and provide for optimum production; and (b) provide for each Party to receive benefits equivalent to the production of salmon originating in its waters.