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MEMORANDUM FOR THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL

**2009 PLAN FOR IMPROVING  
COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERY MONITORING**

(Information Only)

**SUMMARY**

- This note outlines the planning approach for the continued improvement of fisheries monitoring and catch reporting (FMCR) in the commercial salmon fishery for 2009.
- While there is general agreement that improvements are necessary, commercial harvesters are divided on the final standards required for the fishery and are concerned about implementation costs.
- Current FMCR standards across the salmon fleets are uneven. While large improvements to verify catches for commercial salmon fleets participating in demonstration quota fisheries have been paid for and achieved by harvesters, catch verification is generally poor in the competitive fisheries and by-catch monitoring remains a concern in all areas.
- Incremental FMCR improvements are planned for 2009 for the Skeena River seine and gillnet and Fraser River gillnet fisheries to improve catch estimate precision and to address key concerns about by-catch of stocks of concern. These proposed improvements will be supported through PICFI funding.

**Background**

- The Department is being pressed to make necessary improvements to fishery monitoring and catch reporting in commercial salmon fisheries by three key drivers:

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1. to better address resource conservation and fisheries sustainability objectives;
  2. to address food safety issues and respond to consumer demands for certified, sustainable harvested seafood products (e.g. MSC certification) and a changing marketplace with emerging traceability requirements; and,
  3. to support implementation of a share-based approach, where each commercial fleet or group will be allocated a defined share of the allowable catch and where shares can be transferred to First Nations to address treaty obligations. For this approach to succeed there must be full confidence among fishery participants that catch shares are being respected and can withstand independent verification.
- Requirements to monitor and mitigate by-catch of non-target salmon stocks (e.g. Skeena and Fraser River steelhead) and non-salmon species (e.g. *Migratory Bird Convention Act*, *Marine Mammal Protection Act* and *Species at Risk Act*) also necessitate increased monitoring and accounting for by-catch in commercial salmon fisheries.
  - For share-based demonstration fisheries, 100% enumeration of catches by mandatory landing with independent dockside monitoring (paid for by the commercial harvesters) has been in place for several years. For other fleets remaining in competitive fisheries, the enhanced monitoring (and the associated increased monitoring costs) has been cited as a significant disincentive to implementing a share-based approach.
  - In addition, the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (PICFI) provides additional funding for enhanced accountability measures to address the need for enhanced fisheries monitoring and catch reporting. Financial support is available for these activities over a transition period covering the next three years (to March, 2012), with commercial salmon fisheries being a specific priority.
  - The Department has developed a set of FMCR interim standards (TAB 1) that were provided to commercial salmon harvesters in 2008 and are intended to apply to all commercial salmon fisheries, however further consultation is required prior to finalizing the standards.

#### **Analysis / DFO Comment**

- Further progress on harmonization of the FMCR standards across all commercial salmon fleets will involve new measures for many fisheries including mandatory landing sites, independent catch verification, and increased by-catch monitoring.
- A staged implementation approach supported by PICFI funding is planned to implement FMCR standards over the next three years (ending 2011/12) to address harvester's concerns about costs to develop appropriate FMCR tools for each area and to determine efficiencies for moving forward.

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- The Department is proposing to implement incremental improvements in FMCR in the salmon fleets in 2009 as follows:
  - For share-based, commercial demonstration fisheries (Areas A, B, F and H), 100% enumeration of catch by mandatory landing with independent dockside monitoring (paid for by the harvesters) will continue as in past years.
  - PICFI funding will be used to support improved catch in three key areas:
    - For the Fraser River gillnet (Area E) fisheries, a mandatory landing program with partial dock side monitoring is being developed to improve the confidence of the landed catch for sockeye and chum fisheries in 2009.
    - For the Skeena River (Area 4) seine and gillnet sockeye fisheries, observers will be hired to conduct dockside audits of salmon catch deliveries and conduct compliance monitoring for retention of prohibited species.
    - For the Area A seine fleet, a pilot project is also proposed to evaluate the use of electronic video monitoring equipment to audit compliance with licence conditions (e.g. brailing of catches). Approximately 25% of program costs (approximately 1K per vessel) would be paid by harvesters.
- First Nations economic opportunity fishery monitoring will continue to require 100% enumeration of catch by mandatory landing programs and continue to be funded through AFS agreements that also encompass responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on FSC fisheries.
- The use of logs to self-capture and report fishery data will continue to be required for all commercial salmon fisheries. The Department will expand opportunities for commercial harvesters to participate in the electronic (E-log) program in 2009, supported by PICFI.
- While there is general agreement among commercial harvesters that improvements are necessary, commercial harvesters are divided on the final standards required for the fishery and are concerned about implementation costs.
- Commercial harvesters in fleets with demonstration fishery projects and 100% enumeration of catch will be supportive of improvements for other commercial fleets to level the playing field between demonstration and competitive fisheries.
- To address concerns about implementation costs, PICFI funding is being provided to offset the costs of implementing incremental improvements this year; however, commercial fleets will be expected to bear an increasing share of catch monitoring costs until the end of PICFI, at which time the full cost of enhanced monitoring will be assumed by industry.

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**Next Steps**

- Letters will be sent to the Commercial Salmon Advisory Board and Area Harvest Committees formally requesting feedback on the “Interim Standards” document and staged implementation approach over the next three years.
- Department staff are working with the Northern gillnet and seine and Fraser River gillnet fleets to further develop and implement monitoring plans for 2009.
- Fishery and catch monitoring measures for the commercial fishery in future years will be re-evaluated against strategic planning objectives for catch monitoring being developed for all harvesters. Additional measures will likely be required for commercial fisheries in subsequent years.

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Attachment (1)

Tab 1 - Interim Fishery Monitoring and Catch Reporting Standards for Commercial Salmon Fisheries

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