

DISCUSSION PAPER

**Interim Guidance for the Development of
Strategic Plans under Canada's Policy for the
Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon**

G. Alex. Fraser

Prepared for Fisheries and Oceans Canada,

Fisheries Management Branch,

Pacific Region

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1.0 Introduction:

Canada's Policy for the Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon (WSP) was approved by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in May of 2005. The overall goal of the policy is to restore and maintain "healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Canada in perpetuity". Specific policy objectives supporting the achievement of this goal include safeguarding the genetic diversity of wild salmon; maintaining habitat and ecosystem integrity, and; managing fisheries for sustainable benefits.

To achieve these ends the WSP calls for standardized monitoring and assessment of wild salmon population, habitat and eventually ecosystem status. This is intended to provide ongoing information on the current state of the different genetic components of the resource (conservation units in the policy's terminology) and trends in overall resource health. Most importantly, this information is intended to facilitate the development of comprehensive integrated strategic plans that will address the biological status of the resource, its habitat and ecosystem while addressing the needs of people. These plans are intended to guide annual program delivery and subsequent performance review of the policy through ongoing adaptive management.

Strategy 4 of the WSP calls for these plans to be developed through an open, transparent and inclusive process that broadly involves First Nations, other levels of government, fisheries stakeholders and others' with an interest in the salmon resource. The policy anticipates that the design and implementation of a new planning structure to undertake overall responsibility for the development of these plans will take some time. Consequently, on an interim basis the policy calls for the establishment of broadly representative response teams to initiate the development of strategic plans for conservation units that are designated as priorities.

The purpose of this paper is assist departmental staff, response teams and eventually the new planning structure for wild salmon to develop strategic plans under the WSP. To do this it first reviews strategic planning at a conceptual level and places strategic plans into the overall context of the WSP. Second, the paper reviews the description and references to strategic plans within the WSP to clarify the policy's intentions and expectations with respect to the scope and content of these plans. Third, the paper identifies and discusses the organisational needs and recommends appropriate procedures for developing the plans. Finally, a suggested template for documenting strategic plans is offered for consideration. This encompasses an annotated table of contents that includes a discussion of its different elements and some examples of potential content.

2.0 Strategic Planning as a Tool:

Strategic planning is a widely accepted business process used by both non-profit and for-profit organizations in order to define their direction and make decisions on how to get there. It is generally accepted that there is no one perfect model of strategic planning that is appropriate in all circumstances and to all situations. However, the most commonly used model and the one that seems most appropriate to strategic planning under the Wild Salmon Policy is an Issue Based or Goal Based planning model. This involves a linear process that moves from the general to the specific.¹

The development of goal or issue based strategic plans generally involves four steps:

Step 1: Setting a Strategic Direction - Establishing a Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

Step 1 involves determining what you want to achieve with the plan and of equal importance how you want to achieve it. The Vision in a strategic plan establishes the overall intent of the plan. The Vision needs to be forward looking and identify in the broadest terms where you want to be following plan implementation. It should both guide the development of goals and objectives for the plan and summarize these goals and objectives in an effective way.

The Mission statement in a strategic plan identifies the more specific higher level goals that must be achieved in total or in combination in order to reach the plan's Vision. The goals describe the desired outcome of the plan. Each goal in the Mission statement should be clearly linked to an element of the Vision.

Guiding Principles play an important role in the development and subsequent implementation of a strategic plan by stipulating how you intend to achieve the Vision and Mission. They identify key specific factors that must be considered or must be achieved in both designing and in implementing the plan.

Step 2: Strategic Analysis - Evaluating the current situation

A number of techniques are commonly used in the business world such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis at this step of the planning process. The common feature here is to clarify the current situation by compiling available data and information on current status and identifying the internal and external factors that may influence performance and affect the achievement of the plan's Vision and Mission. A key element of this step is identifying the differences between the current situation and where you ultimately want to be at the end of the plan. A further key element at this step is identifying and prioritizing issues that need to be addressed in order to move forward with implementation.

¹ The terminology used in strategic planning can be quite loose. To assist readers, the terminology as used in this paper is specifically defined in Appendix 1.

Step 3: Identifying Tactics, Objectives and a Strategy

Based upon the strategic analysis, tactics can then be developed for achieving the goals of the plan. This includes identifying the specific objectives to be achieved within each strategic goal identified in the Mission. In this sense the objectives are simply goals but at a smaller scale. Determining specific objectives and an appropriate strategy for achieving them may require considerable analysis and thought. Alternative strategies (or sets of tactics) may need to be considered at this stage of the process and evaluated in relation to the goals of the plan. This is particularly the case where the plan's goals lack congruency, that is, they do not link well with each other. In these situations, decisions may need to be made between different strategies that promise to provide different balances of goal achievement. There is considerable further discussion of this in relation to strategic planning under the Wild Salmon Policy. Ultimately, the selected strategy should define the more specific and measurable objectives or performance targets for the plan. This can then facilitate performance tracking over time and operational adjustments to the plan where necessary.

Step 4: Action Planning - Mapping out an appropriate route for getting there.

Action planning that follows the development of a strategy is an important part of the strategic planning process and a fundamental element of the strategic plan. Action planning involves identifying the various activities and tasks that will be undertaken over the term of the strategic plan. The activities and tasks identified in action plans then set the stage for subsequent annual and multi-year operational planning. The objectives established in the action plans are generally focussed on means rather than ends. For example, it may encompass a number of projects that will be pursued in a given time period. Also, the action plans should clearly identify who will be responsible and accountable for these different activities and projects. The actions need to be linked back to the performance targets defined in the strategy. This can then facilitate tracking performance of the plan and making adjustments as appropriate.

Documentation of a strategic plan typically encompasses all four elements. The differences between the current situation and the desired future situation need to be clear. Also, how the proposed tactics within the strategy will bridge the gap between the current and desired future states of the world and why specific strategic choices were made need be evident.

There is a tendency to conceive of "strategic" plans as operating at a very high level to achieve very broadly defined ends over long time periods. However, it should be evident from the description here that this need not be the case. Strategic plans can be developed at many different levels and for shorter time periods. For example, in a corporate environment, strategic plans may be developed for the organization as a whole, for separate business lines or divisions of the organization or for separate functions within the organization (for example information technology). Clearly with lower level strategic plans, the identified ends may be more specific and for shorter time periods. In this sense there is often a continuum between different levels of strategic planning and operational planning. Both strategic and operational planning is concerned with formulating and carrying out courses of action to

attain particular objectives. However, strategic planning generally involves identifying the direction while operational planning involves employing available resources to implement that direction.

With a complex management problem such as Pacific salmon a hierarchy of strategic plans encompassing a hierarchy of goals and objectives are appropriate. In this sense, the Wild Salmon Policy itself represents a high level strategic plan for the salmon resource. Much of the following discussion relates to establishing an appropriate linkage between this higher level plan and the next level of strategic planning for wild salmon. In general terms the objectives established in the Wild Salmon Policy answer the question “why” for the next level of strategic planning. The next level of strategic planning for wild salmon should answer the question of “how” these objectives will be achieved. In short, the next level of strategic planning needs to bridge the gap between the high level goal and objectives reflected in the Wild Salmon Policy and the operational activities required in managing wild salmon on the ground.

3.0 Strategic Planning in the Wild Salmon Policy:

As noted above, although the Wild Salmon Policy does not describe itself as a strategic plan, it is effectively a higher level strategic plan for the wild salmon resource. The goal of the WSP reflects a coherent Vision for the future of the resource, that is, “healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Canada in perpetuity”. Similarly, the three identified objectives in the policy provide a coherent Mission statement for a strategic plan. This includes:

1. Safeguarding the genetic diversity of wild salmon;
2. Maintaining habitat and ecosystem integrity, and;
3. Managing fisheries for sustainable benefits.

Also, there are a number of guiding principles identified in the policy that are to be considered and achieved in the development and implementation of a strategic plan for the resource. These include:

Principle 1- Conservation

Conservation of wild Pacific salmon and their habitats is the highest priority in resource management decision-making.

Principle 2- Honour Obligations to First Nations

Resource management processes and decisions will honour Canada’s obligations to First Nations.

Principle 3- Sustainable Use

Resource management decisions will consider biological, social and economic consequences, reflect best science including Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK), and maintain the potential for futures generations to meet their needs and aspirations.

Principle 4- Open Process

Resource management decisions will be made in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

Finally, the policy identifies six distinct subsidiary strategies or tactics and a number of specific action steps that taken together are intended to achieve the Vision and the Mission identified in the policy. Strategy 4 “Integrated Strategic Planning” specifically identifies that a second level of strategic planning is necessary to achieve the Vision and Mission of the Policy.

Numerous references within the policy help to clarify what is needed at this second level of the strategic planning process. Because of the diverse geography and biology of the wild salmon resource, the range of social and economic interests dependent on the resource and the broad number of localized activities that can impact the resource, plans need to be more refined. In effect, the next level of strategic planning for the resource needs to build from the bottom up of the resource. These plans need to be tailored to specific biological circumstances in the geographic areas where the fish reside and migrate

and reflect the social and economic circumstances in the various communities and interests which depend upon and can impact the resource. To do this, the development of plans at this level needs to involve people at both a local and regional level including First Nations, dependent stakeholders and communities, others with an interest in the resource and other levels of government whose actions can impact upon the resource. All of this is clearly reflected in strategy 4 of the WSP.

3.1 The Geographic and Biological Scope of the Strategic Plans

The geographic and biological scope of the plans is left relatively open in the WSP. Although it is recognized that the next level of plans need to speak directly to the different genetic components of the resource (or conservation units) that are the ultimate target of conservation efforts, there is also a clear recognition of the need to be effective and efficient in the planning process. Although the intention is to develop plans for each conservation unit, developing plans for each conservation unit independently is recognized as impractical and inadvisable from a variety of perspectives. First, there will be inevitable inconsistencies when plans are developed at an overly disaggregated level. Independent plans for a number of different conservation units all resident within the same watershed or harvested in the same fisheries may reflect very different strategic directions. Second, planning in this highly disaggregated way may simply be infeasible. A requirement to independently develop individual plans for potentially hundreds of conservation units may be well beyond the available planning resources within government as well as the interest and energy of stakeholders and other interested parties to participate.

Earlier work in December of 2004 (A Policy Framework for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon) prior to the approval of the Wild Salmon Policy raised this issue directly and suggested a way to resolve it through the development of “planning units” as an organizing construct. The concept proposed was that conservation units for each species in each major watershed along the coast as well as the fisheries that affect them would be linked together for planning purposes. It was suggested, on a preliminary basis, that a total of 56 planning units for the entire coast may be appropriate for this second stage of strategic planning. It was anticipated that these planning units would generally encompass a number of conservation units. However, it was also suggested that “further aggregation or sub-division of these units” may be appropriate “where practical and useful for management purposes”. As a specific example, it was noted that the four distinct run timing groups currently used in the management of Fraser sockeye salmon may remain the appropriate management units for the various conservation units of sockeye salmon originating in the Fraser river watershed.

The general concept of planning units at other than a conservation unit level was retained in the final approved Wild Salmon Policy. A sidebar on pages 25 and 26 of the policy notes “the need to bring together considerations of biology and geography in an organized way with social and economic considerations for practical and efficient planning and fully informed decision-making”. However, as well as aggregate, the potential need to sub-divide conservation units for planning purposes in some circumstances was raised. It was specifically noted that this might be appropriate when conservation units encompass large geographic areas that include more than one watershed or where a number of discrete fisheries are targeted at only sub-components of a conservation unit.

At this early stage of planning under the Wild Salmon Policy, it is suggested that the biological and geographic scope of planning efforts be chosen pragmatically in light of management needs. A high priority should be given to achieving some initial successes from the planning efforts to demonstrate the value of the approach. This speaks to a need to focus on areas where the issues and problems are relatively discrete and manageable or where there is already pre-existing planning capacity or experience with planning that can be built upon. For example, this might include conservation units or geographic areas where SARA Recovery or Watershed Based Fisheries Sustainability or other fisheries planning initiatives have been undertaken or are underway. In these instances it will be important to integrate these prior or current planning initiatives into the strategic planning process.

Also, at this early stage of planning different approaches to aggregating and sub-dividing conservation units for planning purposes could be attempted in different areas of the coast. For example, one planning effort could encompass all species of salmon in a given watershed. In another case, the planning effort could encompass a single conservation unit or even sub-component of a conservation unit harvested in a range of different fisheries. Where there are priority conservation units identified that need to be addressed on an urgent basis by response teams, as a general guideline planning should encompass all of the fisheries that can directly affect them, all of the other conservation units that will be impacted by these fisheries as well as all of the ocean and fresh water areas where they reside and migrate.

In most areas of the coast particularly with sockeye salmon in the major river systems, strategic planning should usually involve aggregates of conservation units. Planning for the sockeye resident in individual lakes makes little sense where the sockeye populations in a number of lakes all face common risk factors such as fisheries or economic development activities in both the ocean and fresh water environments. Planning decisions made to manage and address these risk factors need to consider and account for all of the conservation units that may be impacted by these decisions. Under these circumstances, planning choices made at the aggregate level will effectively translate into impacts on and targets for the individual conservation units within the aggregate. In other cases, planning may involve single conservation units or even sub-components of conservation units. For example, if there is a discrete identifiable fishery that targets pink or chum salmon that originates from one river system or area, it makes little sense to plan at a scale of a conservation unit that encompasses a wide area of the coast and a number of river systems. Where multiple plans deal with different elements of a conservation unit, the overall plan for the conservation unit will reflect the decisions made in a number of plans.

3.2 Planning Team Composition

The biological and geographic scope will play a key role in determining who should be involved in developing the plans. Ideally, all of those with a significant interest in the wild salmon resources within the planning unit, and all of those interests who might directly impact the resource through their decisions and activities should be involved in the planning process. However, the size of the planning team should balance the need to broadly involve all of these interests with manageability of the planning process.

Management literature suggests that team size for optimal functioning (i.e. full participation and involvement) when the assignment is complex or where there are significant differences of view is between five and ten individuals. At the same time, teams as large as twenty five may work if the assignment is more straight-forward and there is a high level of agreement between the parties.² Some options to consider if larger planning teams cannot be avoided is to sub-divide the work load by establishing smaller working groups on specific topic areas or establishing a core planning group with less frequent plenary sessions of the full planning committee to consider more focussed recommendations.

Some questions to consider when identifying relevant interests to participate in specific strategic planning efforts include:

- What First Nations possess claims including treaty and aboriginal rights to the wild salmon within the planning unit?
- What other groups of people are economically or socially dependent on the wild salmon within the planning unit?
- Who is most knowledgeable about wild salmon within the planning unit and related cultural, social and economic issues?
- Who has been involved in conservation and other planning initiatives that directly impact wild salmon within the planning unit?
- Who is having an impact on the conservation of wild salmon its habitat and ecosystem within the planning unit?
- Who can make the plan more effective through participation or ineffective through non-participation or outright opposition to the plan?
- Who is potentially essential to implementing the plan i.e. who might be responsible and accountable for taking potential actions under the plan?

3.3 Expectations of Plan Output

A number of statements in the Wild Salmon Policy attempt to clarify the expectations of the plans in terms of key outputs. Strategy 4 of the Policy is described as requiring the integration of biological, social and economic information to produce “long term strategic plans for salmon and habitat management”. In short, the plans must be more than fishing plans. They should encompass habitat, enhancement and other activities that may impact resource health. It is anticipated that this broad focus in planning will better integrate habitat and resource management activities with harvest management strategies and result in improved decisions in all areas. More specifically, the plans are described as needing to “integrate information on conservation unit and habitat/ecosystem status and:

- Specify long term biological status for conservation units and groups of conservation units;

² For a summary of the available management literature on team size, see reference number 5, NMFS “Interim Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Planning Guidance” page 2.3-8.

- Identify recommended resource management actions to protect or restore salmon, their habitat and ecosystems in order to achieve the targets, and;
- Establish time frames and priorities for action.”

These desired outputs are further clarified in Appendix 2 of the Policy. Appendix 2 identifies the plans as stipulating “explicit biological targets to be achieved for individual conservation units and groups of conservation units and where appropriate time frames for re-building”.

The concept of identifying biological targets for both groups of conservation units and individual conservation units in the plans is important because they frame what the plans are intended to achieve. It is recognized in the Policy that identical, technically determined biological targets are not appropriate for all conservation units. In some instances, the appropriate targets may be production oriented (such as Maximum Sustained Yield) because of the cultural, social and/or economic importance of fisheries that depend upon the resource. In other instances, the appropriate targets may exceed production maximums because of ecosystem considerations or social factors. Finally, in some instances appropriate targets may fall below production maximums because of mixed stock fisheries that are important to sustain or other social and economic priorities that are important to address.

Similarly, the concept of time frames where appropriate to achievement of the biological targets is important. It is recognized in the Policy that even when there is a consensus at the planning table to re-build a conservation unit or group of conservation units from their current level in a plan, the speed with which this might be achieved can be appropriately varied. For example, where the conservation unit or group of conservation units sustains important fisheries, a slower paced recovery strategy may be fully acceptable. In other instances where the state of the conservation unit falls well short of its targets and possibly below its lower benchmarks, and there are no significant cultural, social and/or economic considerations, the most rapid technically feasible recovery strategy may be appropriate.

Finally, the Policy describes a preferred outcome and a minimum bottom line that the plans must be designed to achieve. The preferred outcome of the plans is described as healthy habitat and ecosystems with all conservation units above the higher abundance benchmarks identified in Strategy 1 of the policy. However, the Policy recognizes that this high standard may simply be unrealistic with certain conservation units and groups of conservation units. Consequently, the minimum bottom line serves to identify how all plans will be ultimately assessed for acceptability. This is that all plans must be capable of maintaining or restoring conservation units above the lower abundance benchmarks identified in Strategy 1 of the policy “with an acceptable degree of certainty and within a defined time period”. In short, if one or more conservation units within the planning unit fall below their lower abundance benchmarks (i.e. within the red zone identified in WSP Strategy 1) plans must be designed to re-build these conservation units. In addition, the plans should be designed to prevent all other conservation units within the planning unit from declining below their lower benchmarks. The acceptable degree of certainty around re-building and conservation unit maintenance is left as a matter of judgement that will eventually be determined as plans go forward and are accepted and potentially rejected by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

4.0 Organizational Considerations:

There are a variety of important organizational issues that need to be addressed in advance of and during the planning effort. Most importantly, a first step needs to be the identification of a lead for the planning effort. The planning lead needs to be charged with overall responsibility and accountability for the development of the plan and for its eventual quality. Although a variety of specific related tasks may be assigned to or shared with technical staff, consultants or other planning team members, the overall responsibility for ensuring each of the tasks is completed should rest with the planning lead.

Given the extensive time and effort that may need to be devoted to the planning efforts and the need for ultimate accountability to DFO for the success of the planning efforts, it is suggested in most cases that the designated planning lead be a DFO staff member. However, there may be some circumstances when it is appropriate to delegate this responsibility to others such as a First Nations staff member. In either event, given that the planning lead will seldom have direct line authority over the human and other resources required in the planning effort, it is suggested that planning leads be appointed by the DFO Senior Executive and that expectations of support to the planning initiatives be clarified to all DFO staff.

The following is a list of specific tasks that need to be undertaken either directly by the planning lead or by appropriately assigned individuals under the direction of the planning lead:

4.1 Identifying and Appointing the Planning Team

As noted in section 3.2 above, the establishment of a planning team needs to balance the need for broad participation in the planning effort and the need for manageability in terms of overall numbers. Once a list of appropriate interests for involvement in the planning process has been identified, the specific individuals to be involved should be identified. In identifying these individuals, considerable sensitivity will be needed to respect established representative organizations, existing consultation processes and other ongoing management initiatives related to the planning unit. Strategic planning is not a substitute for existing processes and initiatives but should be designed to build on and integrate these into the development of a plan in order to avoid overlap and duplication and address inevitable capacity problems.

A suggested procedure is to ask for nominees through letters to First Nations and appropriate representative organizations that describe the scope of the planning exercise, the approach being taken to planning (including the need to limit participation to a manageable level) and the specific expertise needed by the nominee. However, if this procedure is used, great care should be taken to either appoint the nominee or to clearly explain the reasons to the nominator why this was not done. Any subsequent concerns over inadequate representation or involvement in the planning process may need to be addressed directly through commitments to further future consultations. For example, it may need to be stressed to First Nations that all recommendations from the planning table will be subject to subsequent bi-lateral consultations with First Nations.

4.2 Arranging for Technical Input and Support

There will be a number of DFO and other technical experts with important knowledge of the wild salmon resources within the planning unit. The planning lead will need to identify the appropriate individuals and arrange for their assignment to support the planning process. Where important knowledge or expertise exists outside the department, it may also be necessary to obtain contract funding support. Management of any contracts for technical support should rest with the planning lead.

4.3 Organizing and Facilitating Meetings

The development of strategic plans will involve numerous meetings potentially over an extended time frame. Logistical arrangements including establishing meeting times, booking appropriate meeting rooms and developing agendas will rest with the planning lead in consultation with the planning participants. Arrangements for chairing and facilitating the meetings will also need to be addressed. The planning lead may undertake these responsibilities directly, but if the issues are complex or involve significant conflict between the various interests involved in planning, the appointment of a professional outside facilitator may be advisable.

4.4 Maintaining Administrative Files

It will be essential that a complete record of the planning deliberations be maintained in order to ensure transparency of the decision-making process and to facilitate future follow up. The files and records need to include minutes of all meetings held as well as data reports, analytical papers and all other material considered by the planning committee in its deliberations. Although minutes do not need to be verbatim, they should summarize all significant issues raised and document all conclusions and decisions made in the process. Overall responsibility for maintaining the administrative record should rest with the planning lead although specific tasks such as note taking and summarization may be delegated to clerical or technical staff. This will be essential if the planning lead is directly chairing and facilitating planning meetings.

4.5 Writing and Editing the Plan

The most significant administrative task involved in the planning process will be writing and editing the strategic plan. Although in some instances the entire plan may be written by the planning lead, more commonly different sections and areas will need to be written by technical experts or consultants retained for specific purposes. However, even in these instances, overall editorial control and final approval of the plans content should rest with the planning lead in consultation with the planning table.

5.0 Developing the Plan:

The Wild Salmon Policy suggests that a structured five step planning procedure be used by response teams (and ultimately the new planning structure) in developing the next level of strategic plans. The Vision and the Mission for this strategic process (Step 1 of strategic planning) are already defined in the Wild Salmon Policy. The five steps in the proposed planning procedure generally cover all of the elements of step two (evaluating the current situation), step three (identifying tactics, objectives and a strategy) and step four (mapping out an appropriate route for getting there) of goal or issue based strategic planning but with some specific adaptations to reflect the particular needs of wild salmon planning. A key intention of the procedure is to facilitate reasoned dialogue among the different interests in the salmon resource on the current situation and encourage the development of consensus on an appropriate management direction.

In order to do this it should be recognized that several iterations may be required at the different steps of the procedure. As planning proceeds, issues and options may be missed that require revisiting earlier steps. Considerable flexibility and patience will be needed particularly in the initial planning efforts to account for this as participants gain comfort and experience with the planning process.

5.1 Step 1: Identifying Planning Priorities

Step 1 in the procedure involves identifying significant issues that need to be addressed in the strategic plan. A key activity here needs to be receiving and considering information from the Department, First Nations and other sources on the current biological status of the conservation unit(s) within the planning unit and the key habitat and ecosystem constraints or threats that they currently face. This then needs to be brought together with cultural, social and economic information provided by First Nations, fishery stakeholders and others involved in the planning process. On the basis of the status information and the planning participants detailed cultural, social and economic knowledge, a list of priorities that need to be addressed in the plan should be developed. The Wild Salmon Policy requires that the list include re-building of any conservation unit(s) that is determined to fall below its established lower benchmark. However, beyond this or if there are no conservation units that fall within this "red" zone, priorities for the planning unit are left to the judgement of the participants in the planning process based upon local knowledge and both regional and local considerations.

The key here is that the identified planning priorities should reflect the interests and concerns of all parties at the planning table in order to provide a sound basis for moving forward with plan development. At this initial stage of planning all participants need to see that their specific issues and concerns are on the table for resolution. These issues may be at a highly localized level such as the lack of sufficient First Nations food fish harvest from a particular stream or area or considerably broader such as a decrease in water flows in streams throughout the watershed and/or the maintenance or re-building of key runs of fish to maintain or increase First Nations, commercial or recreational harvesting in established fisheries.

The importance of this first step in the planning process for wild salmon needs to be stressed. There will be a tendency for many participants in the process to dismiss this step in favour of immediately proceeding to the development of strategies. However, given the wide range of often competing interests in the salmon resource, and a long history of conflict this first step is essential for building trust between the participants and establishing reasonable dialogue and interest based discussion on how to move forward. Failure to take adequate time at this initial stage could lead to the development of bargaining positions that undermine the potential for consensus.

5.2 Step 2: Identifying Resource Management Options and Management Strategies

Step 2 of the planning procedure involves identifying and discussing the different tactics that can achieve the goal and objectives of the Wild Salmon Policy and address the planning priorities identified at Step 1. The tactics may include different fisheries management measures such as selective fishing, fishing time or area restrictions and/or they may include habitat or fisheries production related measures such as watershed development constraints, habitat restoration initiatives or enhancement initiatives.

At this step of the planning procedure it will be important that no realistic management option be left unconsidered. The various tactics deemed to be reasonable after discussion at the planning table need then to be linked together into an overall resource management strategy for the conservation unit or group of conservation units under consideration. At this stage in the procedure, alternative strategies may be identified that reflect different overall approaches or mixes of different tactics. For example, one strategy may rely solely on fisheries management measures while another relies solely on habitat restoration and/or enhancement initiatives. Additional strategies may reflect compromise mixes of different areas of emphasis.

At this step of the planning procedure it will also be important to begin quantifying the intended effects of the different tactics. For example, if the tactic is to reduce fishing effort in order to increase escapements, the intended target exploitation rate and the circumstances under which the target will apply should be specified. The intention could be to maintain a certain percentage exploitation rate indefinitely regardless of run size or it may be to vary the exploitation rate depending upon run size. Also, a cut off run size might be suggested below which no fishing or highly restricted fishing will apply. Similarly, where appropriate, the scale of any fish population enhancement and habitat restoration efforts should be identified. For example, if the intention is to use a hatchery facility, it will be important to know the anticipated capacity in terms of eggs, releases and adult returns.

5.3 Step 3: Establishing an Evaluation Framework

Step 3 of the planning procedure involves establishing a credible, broadly accepted evaluation framework for the strategic plan that captures and reflects all significant biological, cultural, social and economic considerations. The development of an evaluation framework will require First Nations and other participants in the planning process either independently or with advice from departmental advisers to identify a variety of performance measures applicable to the planning unit as a whole, its component conservation units and their underlying local populations. These measures need to be

capable of rating the strategy (or ranking any alternative strategies developed at step 2) of the planning procedure in terms of anticipated performance in relation to the goal and the objectives of the Wild Salmon Policy as well as addressing the planning priorities identified at step 1 of the planning procedure.

Given the goal, objectives and requirements of the Wild Salmon Policy, a number of the performance measures will necessarily be biological in nature. For example, the anticipated escapement of fish for a conservation unit identified as below its lower benchmark may be an appropriate indicator. In the case where there are multiple conservation units within the planning unit, the number or proportion of conservation units anticipated to fall below lower benchmarks or above higher benchmarks may be appropriate. Where computer models of the underlying populations within the planning unit are available, considerations of the probability and likelihood of certain outcomes may be considered. For example, the change in the probability of a conservation unit or group of conservation units exceeding any given benchmark could be identified as an appropriate performance measure.

Where there are significant habitat program or project initiatives identified in a strategy to address limiting factors or threats, it will be equally important to identify appropriate performance measures. For example, this might include the anticipated size of the suitable habitat area protected or developed in the plan or anticipated increases in water flows, nutrient levels or reductions in the level of dissolved solids in water bodies.

Finally, a number of cultural, social and economic measures will be required. In determining these it will be important that the participants in the planning process remain clearly focussed on the limited scope of the strategic plan and its intentions to conserve and protect the resource and its habitat and ensure sustainable fisheries rather than revisiting current or past complaints. For example, the anticipated level of harvest may be an important consideration for many of the parties at the planning table. However, issues of harvest distribution among First Nations, commercial and recreational uses should be avoided to the fullest extent possible in order to avoid unproductive and unnecessary disputes. The distribution of the available harvest is governed by current allocation policies and the current shares of the harvest may or may not apply in the future. It is inappropriate to use the strategic planning table for the resource to visit this matter. Decisions on future allocation policies should be left for separate processes more appropriately designed to address this important issue directly.

For many purposes, anticipated overall abundance and harvestable surpluses in the planning unit may be a reasonable cultural, social and economic performance measure. Having said this, other local and/or regional financial considerations may be important. For example, rather than overall abundance in the planning unit, the abundance of particular runs of fish in particular areas may be of great significance to First Nations for cultural or social reasons. Consequently, an indicator of anticipated abundance for these particular areas or runs may be appropriate. Additionally, the anticipated flow of harvests over time may be important considerations for all harvesting groups in the fishery. Consequently, for both First Nations and commercial fishers, the number of times over any given time period that the abundance of harvest will fall above or below acceptable minimums could be an important indicator. For recreational fishers, the number of times that their fishery will closed over any given time period could be an equally important indicator. With the commercial sector, additional

economic considerations may be significant. For this reason, it may be important to appropriately discount the flow of anticipated harvests over time to reflect financial considerations.

After discussion, it may be evident that some proposed performance measures are highly correlated and can be expected to move in equivalent directions. For example, commercial fishing income and commercial harvest levels will be clearly linked. In these instances, for ease of subsequent interpretation strong consideration should be given to choosing the most appropriate single measure that best reflects these multiple issues and considerations.

5.4 Step 4: Assessing the Likely Impacts of the Strategy

Step 4 of the planning procedure involves using the best available information and techniques to identify the likely future impacts of the strategy on each of the performance measures identified at step 3. For some planning units, computer simulation models of the underlying conservation units and associated fisheries may be available to assist in this exercise. In other cases, reliance may need to be placed on the expert judgements of DFO staff, First Nations and other participants in the planning process.

Regardless of the tools available, it will be important that the evaluation be forward looking and focussed on the future “net” effects of the strategy on the identified performance measures. For this reason, it will often be useful to specify a base case scenario that identifies how things are anticipated to unfold in the future in the absence of the strategy. For example, if conservation unit abundance or harvest levels in the management unit have been on a steady decline for a number of years, this could be anticipated to continue in the absence of management changes. In these circumstances it will be important to account for this in the evaluation in order to avoid underestimating or overestimating the overall effects of the proposed strategy on any given performance measure.

5.5 Step 5: Selecting a Preferred Management Strategy

Where two or more alternative strategies are identified at step 2 of the procedure, the anticipated net effects of each strategy on the various performance measures should be compared and discussed at the planning table. This can facilitate agreement to eliminate strategies that are clearly inferior (i.e. strategies that underperform others in relation to all measures). Consideration of the relative effects of the different strategies may also facilitate agreement on an additional strategy that is clearly superior to those under initial discussion (i.e. a strategy that outperforms others in relation to all measures).

In some cases, two or more alternative strategies may remain on the table after this initial discussion. In these cases, tradeoffs will be apparent among the strategies in terms of biological, social or economic performance measures. One strategy may perform better or worse than another in biological or cultural terms while performing worse or better in social or economic terms. In these circumstances it can be anticipated that there will be differences of opinion between individuals and interest groups on the “best strategy” because of differing priorities and tolerances for risk. The goal at step 5 is to use constructive dialogue among First Nations and others involved in the planning process to resolve these differences, find compromise solutions and develop consensus recommendations wherever possible for

each planning unit. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the remaining strategies should be fully documented and the differences of view among the parties should be fully identified.

Even where there is consensus on a strategic plan, its ultimate approval rests with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. In instances where consensus has not been achieved, the Minister's role will extend to considering the divergent views prior to making the final decision.

Although unspecified in the planning procedure, a necessary sixth step involves translating the approved strategic plan into explicit biological and other targets and where appropriate time frames for re-building as required in the Wild Salmon Policy. From this perspective, the performance measures identified in the evaluation framework at step 3 of the planning procedure and the anticipated effects identified at step 4 of the planning procedure will play a key role. The anticipated effects of the final strategic plan on selected key performance measures will ultimately become the targets for the plan. In short, the key anticipated effects of the plan will need to be documented to facilitate performance tracking and subsequent adjustments to the plan over time as these are deemed necessary.

6.0 Documenting the Plan:

At the end of the planning process, the ultimate need is to document the strategic plan. To assist with this, the following section proposes a template for the contents of strategic plan documents under the Wild Salmon Policy. Each element of a table of contents for a plan is discussed together with a number of potential examples of plan content. This is not to suggest that additional sections may not be appropriate in some instances or that some sub-sections could not be merged when appropriate. The key need is that each section builds on the preceding section along a logical path. The strategic plan document should be self-contained and lead readers from what is known about the current conditions of the wild salmon resources and their habitats within the planning unit to the key cultural, social and economic needs related to these resources and then to an appropriate strategy and program for resource management.

6.1 The Preliminaries: Format, Title Page, Acknowledgements, Disclaimer and Executive Summary

The process of strategic planning in terms of reaching agreement on desired ends and on how to move forward is in many ways more important than the formal plan itself. In spite of best intentions, the plans may not achieve what was anticipated. In other cases, the achievements may vastly exceed expectations. In either of these events the plans will need to be re-visited and revised. To facilitate this, the title page should clearly identify the date of the document and its revision status (i.e. original version or revision number). In addition, each page within the plan should be dated and a consistent numbering system should be used for the different sections within the planning documents.

An acknowledgement section should immediately follow the title page. This should identify the various individuals involved in the planning process and acknowledge the various interests that contributed to the development of the plan (for example, through the provision of nominees or through subsequent comments or review of preliminary plans). A disclaimer may also be essential that indicates that the plan represents present management advice based upon the best available scientific, social and economic information available but does not necessarily represent the views, official positions or approval of any of the individuals or groups involved in plan formulation.

It is strongly recommended that an Executive Summary be developed in all instances that high-lights the key elements in each section of each planning document.

6.2 A Common Preamble: Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

As noted previously, the Wild Salmon Policy effectively represents a high level strategic plan for the wild salmon resource. This includes a coherent Vision for the resource, a comprehensive Mission statement and a number of important key values to guide subsequent strategic planning efforts. The Vision, Mission and Values contained in the Policy were subject to extensive consultations and are broadly supported by First Nations, recreational and commercial stakeholders, environmental interests and the general public.

It is suggested that all strategic plans developed for more localized components of the resource identify the following common Vision, Mission and Values to guide their subsequent planning efforts.

Vision: Healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Canada in perpetuity.

Mission:

Objective 1: Safeguarding the genetic diversity of wild salmon;

Objective 2: Maintaining habitat and ecosystem integrity, and;

Objective 3: Managing fisheries for sustainable benefits.

Guiding Principles:

- Conservation;
- Honouring obligations to First Nations;
- Sustainable use, and;
- Open process.

All of these items are adequately discussed and referenced in the Wild Salmon Policy and further discussion within the context of more localized planning efforts can be limited. The intent of this section should be to directly link all strategic plans at more localized levels with the common goal and objectives already provided by the Wild Salmon Policy.

6.3 Define the Planning Unit

This section of each plan should clearly specify the biological scope of the plan in terms of the species and the specific conservation unit(s) covered. It should also specify the geographic scope of the plan in terms of watersheds and ocean areas as well as the various fishing areas and fisheries that impact upon the planning unit.

As noted previously the scope of the plans, particularly during initial planning efforts may vary. For example, the scope of one plan might be extensive and relate to all five species of Pacific salmon in a given watershed. This may be appropriate where the productivity and/or geography of the watershed are limited and harvesting interests are relatively focussed in a social context. For example, if there are no major intercepting commercial fisheries targeted at any of the resident species and by-catch is insignificant or limited, an extensive approach may have much to recommend itself. However, if even one of the individual species originating in a watershed is subject to targeted harvesting by a wide range of different interests over a geographically dispersed area and/or the fishery is of high importance to number of interests, a more refined approach to planning focussing on a single species may be warranted. As specific examples it may be appropriate to develop a strategic plan for all five species of Nass River salmon or it may be appropriate to develop strategic plans for Fraser River or Skeena River sockeye salmon.

In some cases it may also be appropriate to define the strategic planning unit to contribute to ongoing management needs of the department and/or integrate with the needs of other agencies. For example, a planning unit could be defined that fits within a specific BC Hydro water use planning process or specific provincial land use planning process. In addition, where enhancement facility planning is a priority within the Department, the planning unit could be defined to focus on one or more specific hatchery or other major enhancement facilities.

6.4 Summary of Current Resource and Habitat Status

A general summary of the biological status of all conservation units within the planning unit and their habitat should be developed. This should reflect the current state of scientific knowledge as well as Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and local ecological knowledge (when this is available) about resource status and current trends. This summary will obviously rely heavily on what scientific information can be provided by DFO staff and others as appropriate. DFO has developed, and tested on a limited scale, templates for overview and status reports to present key information and available data on conservation unit geography and population, habitat and ecosystem status. Information from all available overview and status reports for the conservation units under consideration should be appropriately summarized in this section of the plan and integrated with available traditional and local ecological knowledge.

To the fullest extent possible the information reported should be peer reviewed to ensure maximum reliability. Where one or more of the conservation units has been listed by Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), additional sources of information may include any Species Recovery and Action Plans developed under this legislation.

Suggested sub-sections include:

6.4.1 Life History and Ecology

This sub-section should include a brief description of the life history and ecology of the species within the planning unit focussing on those aspects that are pertinent to management planning. Relevant information may include age at maturity, breeding habits, diet and feeding habits, migration and movement patterns, natural sources of mortality etc. This section should also document what is known about the habitat needs of the species at its different life stages. Discussion of known key differences between optimal, sub-optimal and marginal habitat at different life stages should also be provided.

6.4.2 Population Status, Trends and Distribution

The best available numbers on the current and historical abundances of the conservation units of wild salmon within the planning unit as well as their current and historically occupied range should be summarized. Also, known differences in reproduction and recruitment rates between different conservation units could be important and should be reported. Any available projections of this data based upon recent trends should also be provided. Further, any populations known to be extirpated should be identified. Note should be made of the degree of confidence there is in the available

information. This section should include a summary assessment of the current biological status of each conservation unit within the planning unit. Ideally this should encompass the estimated abundance of the conservation unit in relation to its established benchmarks under Strategy 1 of the Wild Salmon Policy but other less precise assessments may need to be used in earlier planning efforts if these benchmarks are unavailable.

6.4.3 Habitat and Ecosystem Status and Trends

A similar summary of habitat and ecosystem status and trends should also be attempted to the fullest extent possible. The current template for DFO habitat status reports calls for the known habitat requirements of the various life history stages of the different species of salmon to be used with available data to define known habitat limiting factors and high value habitats for each life history stage. Information from all available habitat status reports for the conservation units under consideration should be appropriately summarized in this section of the strategic plan.

The summary should pay particular attention to any conservation units within the planning unit that are determined to be within a WSP “red zone”. In these instances, an overview of any habitat deterioration over time should be provided and causes should be identified to the extent that they can be determined. Also, to the extent possible, the source of any continuing threats should be identified. Similarly, particular habitats that are known to be of significant concern should be identified. For example, known areas of significant habitat loss should be documented and cross-referenced to the impacted life stage of the species. Habitat limiting factors and opportunities should also be a focus in the summary. For example, if habitat for a given life stage is known to be a limiting factor, this should be documented. Similarly, if the species only occupies a fraction of the habitat considered to be suitable at a given time this should be documented.

6.4.4 Current Conservation Initiatives

In all areas of the coast there will be numerous ongoing conservation initiatives and efforts related to the wild salmon resources within the planning unit. For example, these may include ongoing enhancement initiatives by local First Nations or community groups, local habitat restoration efforts or a range of other activities under local Watershed Based Fisheries Sustainability Plans. In addition, there may be a variety of fisheries management measures already in place to conserve and protect the resource under the Integrated Fisheries Management Planning process. All of these initiatives, whether undertaken by private individuals, First Nations, local, provincial or federal government, should be discussed here.

The discussion should include a description of the objectives of the initiatives, the accomplishments to date and an overview assessment of the effectiveness of the initiatives. The overview assessment should focus on identifying both the positive benefits and any obvious inadequacies in the efforts to date. For example, if habitat efforts are focussed on only a portion of the species habitat that is considered to be at risk, this should be documented. The intention here should be to neither denigrate nor praise current efforts. The intention should be to identify positive efforts that should continue

unchanged and any advisable adjustments and changes to these efforts that may improve their effectiveness in conserving and protecting the wild salmon resource.

6.5 Planning Unit Priorities

This section of the plan should document the various priorities identified at the planning table. As required by the Wild Salmon Policy, the re-building of any conservation unit that falls below its established lower benchmark must be established as a key priority for the planning unit. Other key priorities, or where there are no conservation units in red status, all key priorities for the planning unit are left to the judgement of First Nations, fisheries stakeholders and other interests involved in the planning process. These priorities should reflect their detailed knowledge of cultural, social and economic circumstances surrounding the resource.

The precise key priorities that will apply to any planning unit will vary depending upon the condition of the resource and the specific cultural, social and economic circumstances surrounding the resource and its associated fisheries. The list of priorities developed and documented should reflect the full range of concerns of all of the participating interests at the planning table. Documentation should attempt to clarify the nature of the concern, why it is an issue and for which party or parties involved in the planning process.

Suggested sub-sections for this section include:

6.5.1 Conservation Priorities

This section should reiterate and summarize a list of any conservation units within the planning unit that fall within a WSP “red” zone. A minimum re-building standard in the form of a WSP lower benchmark or in the absence of a designated lower benchmark, some acceptable equivalent should be stated. In addition, a further priority is to maintain the abundance of all conservation units at acceptable levels. For all of these other conservation units a minimum abundance standard should be specified. This could be the designated lower benchmarks for these conservation units or higher abundance levels depending upon the judgement of the planning table.

6.5.2 Food, Social and Ceremonial Fishing Priorities

A key issue for a planning unit could be insufficient food fish harvest to meet the sustenance and/or cultural needs of local First Nations. This issue might be localized with respect to a certain conservation unit or it may be general throughout a watershed. An attempt should be made in this section to clarify the nature of the First Nations concern and the First Nations needs in respect to the resources within the planning unit. This may include documenting recent First Nations harvests and harvest distribution in relation to what First Nations determine to be their needs or a more qualitative assessment of the issue.

6.5.3 Commercial Fishing Priorities

A key issue for the planning unit could be the need to sustain one or more commercial salmon fisheries that rely upon harvest from these conservation units because of their importance to the livelihood of established fishers. In this event, this section should document recent commercial harvests including its distribution among different commercial gears and areas. Additionally, attention should be paid to the relative importance of the harvest to different groups of commercial fishers. This may take the form of estimated proportions of their total harvest or other similar data. The relative participation by local First Nations and other local residents could also be important here.

6.5.4 Recreational Fishing Priorities

A further key issue could be the need to sustain the opportunity and expectation to harvest fish recreationally because of its social importance to residents in one or more local communities or local business reliant on non-resident tourists. In this event, this section should document recent recreational harvests and participation in the fishery. Particularly where the recreational interest is largely business related, it may be important to document employment and other related impacts.

6.5.5 Other Priorities

Priorities for a planning unit may also be non-consumptive in nature. For example, it may be important to substantially increase the abundance of a particular conservation unit beyond its conservation needs because of its uniqueness or its importance to the eco-system. In these instances, an attempt should be made to document exact nature of the priority and the reasons behind it.

6.6 The Strategy

Ideally, this section of the plan should document a consensus strategy that results from the deliberations at the planning table. In effect, this should reflect the bottom line from Steps 2 through 5 of the planning procedure described above. This bottom line will have encompassed a full discussion through the various steps in the planning procedure of the resource management options available and the tactics that might be used to achieve the goal and the objectives of the Wild Salmon Policy and address the specific planning priorities identified in Section 3 of the Plan. Further it will reflect an evaluation by the participants at the planning table of different mixes of these management tactics in relation to the goal, objectives and priorities for the planning unit and an eventual consensus on the most appropriate mix.

However, where consensus cannot be achieved after interest based discussions during step 5 of the planning procedure, the lack of consensus should be documented as well as any alternative strategies remaining on the planning table.

In either case, all of the recommended elements of the strategy or strategies should be fully documented. It is suggested that, for ease of reporting and subsequent follow up, the various elements be reported under separate Fisheries Management, Habitat, Enhancement and Other headings. In instances where more than one alternative strategy needs to be reported, it is suggested that reporting

emphasize the specific differences between the strategies. Extensive discussion will be required in this section in order to clarify the nature and the extent of the management measures recommended and how they differ from current management practice.

Suggested sub-sections for this section include:

6.6.1 Fisheries Management Measures

If recommended fisheries management measures involve changing exploitation rates in established fisheries, it will be important to specify what exploitation rates should be targeted and under what conditions they should apply. This may encompass a fixed target exploitation rate or variable exploitation rates at different levels of abundance. This may also include a cut off abundance level below which fishing is either eliminated or highly restricted. Fisheries management measures could also include recommended time and area restrictions to control the harvest of a particular conservation unit or timing group. Selective fishing measures might also be recommended to reduce or eliminate by-catch of a species in certain fisheries or creative sentencing for offences under the Fisheries Act that directs financial penalties to restoration or other activities within the planning unit.

6.6.2 Habitat Measures

The nature of any recommended habitat protection measures should be clarified. This could include revisiting priorities within existing habitat protection programs and measures or re-focussing enforcement efforts. For example, covenanting land to protect highly productive habitat or implementing a water metering program to help address a limiting factor such as low water flows may be recommended. In these instances the intent of any changes should be clearly specified. Other recommended actions could include habitat restoration or enhancement measures such as re-vegetation of riparian areas to address high temperatures or developing off-channel habitat to address limited rearing areas. If direct habitat restoration and enhancement measures are recommended in the strategy, the scale and to the extent possible the recommended focus of these activities should be clearly specified. Related ongoing habitat restoration and management activities should be incorporated into this section of the plan to the extent and in the form that they are recommended to continue whether these are delivered privately or by local, provincial, First Nations or federal governments. Any suggested adjustments and changes to improve the performance of these ongoing initiatives should be clearly specified in the strategy.

6.6.3 Fish Population Enhancement Measures

Specific population enhancement initiatives may be recommended as part of the strategy. This could include captive propagation, reintroduction or augmentation of species through spawning channels, fertilization or hatchery activities. As with recommended habitat restoration measures, the scale and the focus of any recommended enhancement activities should be specified to the extent possible. Also, ongoing enhancement initiatives to the extent and in the form that they are recommended to continue should be incorporated into this section of the plan, whether these are delivered privately, by local First

Nations or the federal government. Any suggested adjustments and changes to improve the performance of these ongoing initiatives should be clearly specified in the strategy.

6.7 Anticipated Impacts and Effects

There are a variety of reasons that it will be important to document the anticipated impacts and effects of the strategic plan.

First, this will be important for obtaining ultimate approval of the plan from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. In order to provide approval, the Minister will need to be assured that it contributes to achieving the goal and objectives of the Wild Salmon Policy. Specifically, the Minister will need to be assured that the proposed plan meets the minimum bottom line specified in the Wild Salmon Policy. That is, the Plan must be realistically capable of maintaining or restoring conservation units above the lower abundance benchmarks identified in Strategy 1 of the policy “with an acceptable degree of certainty and within a defined time period”. Documenting the anticipated impacts of the plan will be important for providing this assurance to the Minister.

Second, the anticipated impacts of the plan will effectively establish the measurable biological, cultural, social and economic targets for the plan. This will be important, in conjunction with ongoing monitoring, for assessing the plan’s performance over time. The Plan’s performance in relation to its targets will form the basis for considering whether future adjustments and changes to the plan are necessary. For example, if conservation units do not re-build as intended in the plan or harvests fall below anticipated levels, the reasons for sub-standard performance will need to be investigated. If the plan was implemented as designed, and there are no other confounding factors it may be necessary to revisit the plan itself. In some cases modest adjustments to the plan may be appropriate, while in others a more fundamental restructuring of the overall strategy may be essential.

In documenting the anticipated impacts and effects of the plan and establishing performance targets, the evaluation framework developed at Step 3 and the evaluation of the plan undertaken at Step 4 of the WSP planning procedure will play a central role. The key performance measures used by the planning table to evaluate the plan, together with the forecast effects of the plan on these performance measures should be reported in this section. It is suggested in order to provide a clear linkage to the Wild Salmon Policy that the various measures be organized and reported under the three strategic goals identified in the policy and reiterated in the preamble to the strategic plan.

Suggested sub-sections include:

6.7.1 Safeguarding the Genetic Diversity of Wild Salmon

The planning priorities associated with this strategic objective should be clearly stated in this section. For example, if a conservation unit is currently deemed to be in a WSP red zone, the re-building of this unit “with an acceptable degree of certainty and within a defined time frame” is a required priority in a strategic plan. Performance targets related to this priority may include a projected time frame to re-build the CU to an acceptable level (such as its lower benchmark abundance level), the average

projected increase in escapement within a defined time period (such as 4 cycles) and/or the estimated change in the probability of re-building to an acceptable level within a defined time period.

A further priority associated with this strategic objective is ensuring that all conservation units are maintained at acceptable abundance levels (i.e. above lower benchmarks). Performance targets associated with this priority might include forecast average abundance in relation to acceptable levels such as established upper and lower benchmarks for all of the conservation units within the planning unit.

6.7.2 Maintaining Habitat and Ecosystem Integrity

The planning priorities associated with this might include the rehabilitation of specific areas in order to improve the overall quality of quantity of habitat available. Alternatively, they might include eliminating or controlling a series of ongoing threats to wild salmon habitat. Performance targets identified and reported in this section might include the projected changes in the area of high quality habitat, kilometres of accessible stream length or other related changes that are anticipated with plan implementation.

6.7.3 Managing Fisheries for Sustainable Benefits

The planning priorities associated with this strategic goal could include improving the availability of fish to First Nations for food, social and ceremonial fishing purposes, maintaining and improving commercial harvests or maintaining the opportunity and expectation to catch fish for recreational purposes. In the case of food, social and ceremonial fisheries, performance targets might include projected changes in the average availability of fish in specific terminal areas favoured by First Nations fishers. Projected changes in the commercial harvest with versus without the plan will always be a key indicator where commercial harvest is a significant issue. However, the anticipated flow of the harvest over time may also be a significant issue for the commercial sector for financial reasons. A series of targets that reflect both anticipated short term and long term harvests may be appropriate to account for this. Where the recreational fishing is a significant issue, the key priority will be to maintain the opportunity and expectation to fish recreationally rather than harvest or abundance levels. An appropriate target here might be the projected frequency that the recreational fishery will be closed.

7.0 Summary

Canada's Policy for the Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon was approved by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in May of 2005. The policy represents a high level strategic plan for the wild salmon resource. It encompasses a coherent strategic Vision for the future of the resource and three high level strategic goals that in combination will result in "healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Canada in perpetuity". To facilitate the achievement of these strategic goals, the policy calls for a second level of strategic planning to build a link between the high level goals of the policy and the detailed operational activities required to manage wild salmon on the ground.

This second level of strategic plans needs to be tailored to the specific biological circumstances in the geographic areas where wild salmon reside and migrate and reflect the social and economic circumstances and needs of the various communities and interests that depend upon and can impact the resource. To do this effectively, the development of these plans needs to broadly involve people at both a local and regional level including First Nations, dependent stakeholders and communities, others with an interest in the resource and other levels of government whose actions can impact upon the resource.

The purpose of this paper is to assist departmental staff, First Nations and other participants in this planning process to develop these necessary strategic plans. Strategic planning is a widely accepted process used to define organizational direction and make decisions on how to get there. It is suggested that a goal or issue based strategic planning model is most appropriate to strategic planning for wild salmon. This involves a linear process that moves from the general goals established in the Wild Salmon Policy, to analysis of the current situation within more localized planning units, to the establishment of more specific planning priorities and objectives. The identification of tactics and an overall strategy for addressing these priorities and achieving these objectives then follows together with measurable performance targets for assessing achievement.

Some suggestions are offered with respect to the organization of the planning effort. Most significantly, there is a need to appoint a planning lead tasked with overall responsibility and accountability for each planning effort. The planning lead's responsibilities will include: identifying and appointing an appropriate planning team; arranging for necessary technical input and support; organizing and facilitating planning meetings; maintaining administrative files, and; writing and editing the final plan. The responsibility for many of these specific tasks may be delegated to administrative, technical or contract personnel, but it will be important that overall accountability for the planning effort rest with the planning lead.

The Wild Salmon Policy suggests that a structured five step procedure be used in the development of the strategic plans. This follows along a goal or issue based strategic planning model with some specific adaptations that reflect the particular needs of wild salmon planning in a multi-interest environment. The key intention of the procedure is to build trust, facilitate interest based dialogue among the parties at the table and encourage consensus. Although alternative less structured procedures could be

followed in developing plans, this overall approach is highly recommended given the wide range of often competing interests that may be at the planning tables for wild salmon and the frequent history of conflict between them.

The plan document is the key output of the process. The document will need to accurately reflect all of the technical information considered at the planning table, all of the discussions at the planning table and the ultimate decisions made and recommendations put forward. Producing and finalizing the document could be a challenging task potentially involving numerous contributors and extensive review and comment by all of the participants at the planning table. A suggested template is provided to help guide the writing and editing effort. This encompasses a general table of contents and a number of examples of potential contents. This is not to suggest that additional sections may not be appropriate in some instances or that some sub-sections could not be merged when appropriate. However, the key need is that each section builds on the preceding section along a logical path. The strategic plan document should lead readers from what is known about the current conditions of the wild salmon resources and their habitats within the planning unit to the key cultural, social and economic needs related to these resources and then to an appropriate strategy and program for resource management. Given that numerous strategic plans for wild salmon are anticipated under the Wild Salmon Policy careful attention should be paid to consistency in format and general content.

As a final comment, it has often been said that the process of strategic planning is as important and perhaps more important than any plans that are developed. The process provides an opportunity to clarify thinking, identify key issues, resolve differences of view or at least clarify where these differences are real and generate a commitment to moving forward. The plans that are developed may or may not be effective in achieving the outcomes desired. However, the planning process provides the basis for making subsequent adjustments and changes to address such problems as they arise. All of this is to say that waiting for the perfect planning procedure or the development of the perfect plan is the wrong approach to strategic planning. It is better to make a start to strategic planning and learn through doing along the way. Both the procedures initially used in developing plans and the plans themselves should be viewed as starting points that can both be improved over time. It is hoped that this document assists departmental staff, First Nations and stakeholders in the wild salmon resource to move forward with this important initiative.

Appendix 1

Strategic Planning Terms and Definitions

The language used in strategic planning can be quite loose and highly variable. Different terminology is sometimes used in one planning process than in another to describe the same concept or idea. In other cases, different break points are established in a continuum between the use of one term and another in different plans. Sometimes too, terminology is used in one strategic planning process that is not generally used in others. All of this follows from the fact that strategic planning is generally tailored to the specific needs of the organisation and the specific management problem being addressed.

The following definitions clarify the terminology as used in this paper as well as drawing some linkages to terminology frequently used in other strategic planning processes.

Vision: The Vision in a strategic plan describes the future state of the world that is intended to result from the implementation of the strategic plan. The Vision should provide overall guidance to the strategic planning process. It should both guide the development of and effectively summarize the goals and objectives of the plan. A Vision is not essential to strategic planning and many strategic planning processes proceed on the basis of a Mission statement alone.

Mission: The Mission statement in a strategic plan should document the high level strategic goals that need to be achieved individually and in combination to achieve the future state of the world described in the Vision. As with the Vision, the objectives need to be forward looking and define as precisely as possible what needs to be achieved by the plan.

Guiding Principles: Guiding principles in a strategic plan provide guidance on both how the plan should be developed and how the plan should be implemented. They describe bottom line factors that need to be considered in developing and achieved in implementing the plan. Many strategic plans use the alternative term “values” to describe these factors. Values in strategic planning can be generally viewed as synonymous with guiding principles.

Strategy: Much has been written attempting to define strategy. A useful definition provided by Fred Nickols of Distance Consulting describes strategy as a “general framework that provides guidance for actions to be taken and, at the same time, is also shaped by the actions taken”. Nickols emphasises that a necessary pre-condition for a strategy is a clear understanding of the ends to be obtained. Without a clear understanding of the ends to be obtained, actions may still proceed, but they may be fragmented, and work at cross purposes. A strategy is intended to link actions together in a coherent way and prevent actions from deteriorating into “flailing about”.

Tactics: Tactics are the approaches taken to different actions in a strategic plan. Tactics in effect represent a bridge between the strategy and the actions taken in a strategic plan. Tactics are effectively subsidiary strategies in a strategic plan and many strategic plans (including the Wild Salmon Policy) describe the each of the tactics being used as individual strategies. The strategy in a strategic plan usually involves the use of a combination of different tactics.

Goals and Objectives: In strategic planning there is a continuum between goals and objectives. Goals are generally used to describe the higher level outcomes that the plan is intended to achieve. Objectives generally refer to lower level outcomes that the plan is intended to achieve. Objectives usually define the increasingly more specific accomplishments required to achieve the goals of the plan.

Issues: In the context of this paper, the term “issues” refers to key factors that must be addressed by the strategic plan. These key factors effectively define the priorities for the strategic planning process. In this sense issues and priorities are often used synonymously in the text.

Priorities: As noted above, issues and priorities are often used synonymously in this paper. The planning priorities effectively provide guidance to the planners as they develop the plan.

Performance Measures: Performance measures in the context of this paper are indicators that can be used to assess alternative approaches to achieving the goals and objectives of the plan and addressing planning priorities. To be useful in the planning process the measures need to link clearly to the goals and objectives of the plan. Measures need not be quantitative in nature. Qualitative measures or indicators such as high/medium/ low can be equally useful to the planning process.

Targets: Targets are criteria that can be used to assess performance of the plan. Targets are a sub-set of the most significant performance measures used in developing the final strategic plan. In this sense they become the measurable objectives for the plan.

Options: Options are alternative approaches that can be used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Options may include different mixes of tactics for achieving the goals and objectives. Options may include a range of different actions’ within any given tactic. Options may also include different emphases and mixes of tactics and actions. Ultimately any of these differences can reflect different strategies for achieving the goals and objectives of the plan.

Selected References

1. **“Canada’s Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon”** – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Pacific Region) - ISBN 0-662-40538-2 – Cat. No. Fs23-476/2005E - June 2005.
2. **“A Policy Framework for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon”** - Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Pacific Region) – December 2004.
3. A useful general introduction to Strategic Planning can be found on the Wikipedia internet site at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_Planning. Considerable additional detail can be found on the Free Management Library internet site at: http://www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm.
4. A useful earlier attempt at strategic planning for wild salmon on Canada’s west coast can be found in **“Pacific Region Salmon Resource Management Plan – Volume 1: Inner South Coast and Fraser River”** – Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Vancouver, BC – 1988.
5. **“Interim Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Planning Guidance”** – United States National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, MD – Original draft October 2004/Updated July 2006.
6. An example of a Recovery Strategy developed under the Species at Risk Act is provided in **“Conservation Strategy for Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), Interior Fraser River Populations”** – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Pacific Region) – October 2006.