# RIVERS SMITH SALMON ECOSYSTEMS PLANNING SOCIETY
## AGM MEETING
## April 25 2006
### 9:30 a.m. to 3:30

Present:

Present: Bruce Burrows, Lewis Bublé, Rick Routledge, Dave Peacock, Karl Wilson, Sandie MacLaurin (by phone)

The purpose of the meeting was to begin a strategic planning exercise to determine the future of RSSEPS. Two issues have prompted this: one is the loss of funding from PSF for field projects and one is the decision by the First Nations to reconsider their membership in the Partnership. The meeting began with a review by David of the goals and objectives of the Society, and the projects that have been accomplished in 2003, 2004, and 2005. The following is from the RSSEPS web page:

**Mission and Guiding Values**

1. Preservation first!

2. Resource protection of total resource base...no stock "written off".

3. Respect and plan with traditional and local knowledge.

4. Use resources with economic efficiency...defined in the broadest sense, including social & ecological.

5. Fair opportunity for local people to benefit from local fisheries resources.

**Goals**

1. To protect the diversity and productive potential of salmon, other fish and their ecosystem.

2. To realize, through restoration and longer-term stewardship, high and sustainable levels of fish production and ecosystem potential.

3. To optimize -ecological, social and economic values of Rivers and Smith Inlet salmon productivity.

4. To support local people, communities and others dependent on resources in their own approach to development based on recovery and stewardship

5. To build an innovative and exemplary team with the capacity to sustain full restoration and long-term stewardship.

The following is from the Executive Summary of the Recovery Plan.

The long-term objective of activities associated with the Recovery Plan is ***to re-establish numbers and production equivalent to best estimates of long-term capacity and historic levels. In so doing we further aim to maximize the net sustainable biological, economic and social benefits from Rivers and Smith Inlet fish, ecosystem and people resources.***
This plan sets the course for finding new ways to restore populations, manage fisheries, involve local and other interests, and contribute to sustaining local communities and others with a long term interest in the resource.

### 1.3 Guiding Principles for Recovery Planning

The RSSEPS has reviewed the principles that guide other groups and organizations in recovery planning and has adopted its own specific approach and guidelines for this initiative. The RSSEPS drew on the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS 1996), Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund (PSEF 2001), DFO Wild Salmon Policy (DFO 2000a) and other directives on conservation and recovery planning to identify the following guidelines for recovery planning. Based on the review of other approaches, but, equally, based on the shared values and understandings of its membership, the RSSEPS has adopted the following 5 principles for recovery planning:

Deleted:

1. ***Conservation of fish stocks, their habitat and ecosystem integrity to sustain productivity will take precedence in managing the resource.***

2. ***Recovery is to include the entire ecosystem and all its evolutionarily important components. All species, stocks and populations are valued.***

3. ***Benefits and costs will be defined in the broadest sense, including social and ecological valuations.***

4. ***Local people and interests must be involved in recovery initiatives.***

5. ***The maintenance and further development of collaboration among the many parties concerned with Rivers and Smith, is essential to recovery and future stewardship.***

The following reports were done for the Rivers Smith Partnership Group starting in 2000. Funding was provided by BC Fish Renewal, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Pacific Salmon Foundation

- **Overview of Rivers Inlet and Smith Inlet ecosystems**
  Rivers Smith Partnership Group 2000
- **Effects of Aquatic Log Handling and Wood Debris Accumulations On Fish and Fish Habitats**
  The Oweekeno-Kitasoo-Nuxalk Tribal Council
  And Coastal and Oceans Resources Inc. 2001
- **Fishwheel Project on the Wannock River, BC**
  Rivers Smith Partnership Group 2000
  **Recommendations for A Recovery Plan for Rivers Inlet and Smith Inlet Sockeye Salmon**
  Rivers Smith Partnership Group 2000
- **Interactions of harbour seals and salmonids in upper Rivers Inlet and Owikeno Lake, British Columbia: An Initial assessment.**
  Rivers Smith Partnership Group 2002

Projects and reports for 2003 are as follows:

Hydro Acoustic Project Wannock River
The Docee Fence Co-Management Project
Early Marine Survival Project
The Docee Rotary Screw Trap Pilot Project.

\The following tables show projects for 2004 and 2005.

# RSSEPS Projects 2004

| Project # | Project Name | PSEF budget | Total Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| RS1 2004 | **Project Coordination** | **$52,000** | $52,000 |
| RS 3 2004 | **Wannock River Hydro Acoustic Proposal - LGL** | **$7,000** | $7,000 |
| RS 4 2004 | **Early Marine Productivity Studies**<br>Project Lead - Rick Routledge | **$63,000** | $169,300 |
| RS 5 2004 | **Docee Fence Co-Management Project**<br>Project Lead - Doug | **$10,000** | $23,500 |
| RS 7 2004 | **Critical Habitat Survey of Long Lake Chinook**<br>Project Lead - Doug | **$10,000** | $14,000 |
| RS 8 2004 | **Enhancement Evaluation Program – Owikeno Basin**<br>Project Lead – Jonathan Hepples/Sandie MacLaurin | **$13,100** | $33,752 |
| RS 9 2004 | **Genesee River Fish Counting Fence**<br>Project Lead – Jonathan Hepples | **$3,000** | $6,250 |
| RS 10 2004 | **Productive Capacity Review – Pacificus Consulting** | **$7,000** | 7000 |
| RS 11 2004 | **Rivers Inlet Creel Survey**<br>Project Lead Bruce Burrows | **$14,000** | $39,000 |
| RS12 2004 | **Wannock River Dead Pitch**<br>Project Lead Bruce Burrows | **$17,536** | $33,536 |
| | **Total Proposed Budget** | **$196,636** | $385,338 |
| | **Total Budget Available from PSF** | **$200,000** | |

## RSSEPS Project Summary 2005

| Project # | Project Name | 2004 Surplus | PSF budget 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|
| RS1 2005 | **Project Coordination** | **$17,890** | $47,000 |
| RS 15 - 2005 | **Coho DNA Survey -Owikeno Lake** | | $10,124 |
| RS 8 2005 | **Enhancement Evaluation Program – Owikeno Basin** | **$13,000** | $13,000 |
| RS 4 2005 | **Early Marine Productivity Studies** | **$19,639** | $30,000 |
| RS 5 2005 | **Docee Fence Co-Management Project** | **$5,596** | $8,000 |
| RS 14 - 2005 | **Sensitive Habitat Survey Owikeno Lake** | | $9,000 |
| | **Total Proposed Budget** | | **$117,124** |
| | **Total Budget Available from PSF** | | **$120,000** |

The following projects have been agreed to for 2006.

| Project | Budget |
|---|---|
| • Project Coordination | $20,000 - PSF |
| • Rivers Echo Sounding Project | $55,000 – Northern Boundary Fund |
| • Smith Inlet Sensitive Habitat Atlas | $6,000 – to be determined |
| • Early Marine Productivity Studies | $? -Tulla Foundation & PSF |

The 25 projects that were identified in the Recovery Plan were reviewed. They are

| | Category | Project Name | Target Species / Lifestage | Location | Year | Season |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Information and Coordination* | Planning Group Coordination and Support | | Rivers and Smith Inlets | Continuing | Year-Round |
| 2 | *Knowledge* | TEK study | All | Entire area | 2005 | Year-round |
| 3 | | Ecosystem modeling | All | Entire area | 2005-2007 | Year-round |
| 4 | | Analysis of lake and fjord sediments | All | Owikeno and Long Lake | 2005 | Year-round |
| 5 | | Analysis of glacial retreats | All | Rivers and Smith Inlet Watershed | 2005 | Year-round |
| 6 | | Analysis of past primary productivity | All | Inlets and beyond | 2005 | Year-round |
| 7 | | Hydrodynamic modeling | All | Rivers Inlet and Wyclees Lagoon | 2005 | Year-round |
| 8 | *Stock Assessment* | Adult sockeye enumeration | Sockeye, coho, chinook / adult | Docee River | 2004 - 2008 | June-Nov |
| 9 | | Adult sockeye enumeration | Sockeye | Wannock River, Owikeno Lake | 2004 - 2008 | Summer – Fall |
| 10 | | Juvenile sockeye assessment | Sockeye | Long Lake | 2004 | Spring |
| 11 | | Juvenile assessment | Sockeye, chinook, coho | Wannock River, Owikeno Lake | 2004 | Spring |
| 12 | | Adult assessment - Creel surveys | All | Rivers Inlet | 2004 - 2008 | Summer |
| 13 | | Adult chinook enumeration | Chinook | Rivers Inlet, Smith Inlet | 2004 - 2008 | Fall |
| 14 | | Adult chum assessment – Nekite River | Chum | Nekite River | 2004 - 2008 | August - October |
| 15 | | Coho juvenile surveys (fry density) | Coho | Smith / Rivers Inlet drainages | 2004 - 2008 | Summer, Fall |
| 16 | | Sockeye enhancement / mark recapture / fecundity estimates | Sockeye | Long Lake, Owikeno Lake | 2004 - 2005 | Fall – Winter |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | *Habitat Assessment and Rehabilitation* | Lake limnology monitoring | Sockeye | Owikeno and Long Lake | 2004 | |
| 18 | | Long Lake enrichment | Sockeye | Long Lake | 2004 - 2007 | Spring – Summer |
| 19 | | Critical habitat surveys | All | Smith Inlet and Rivers Inlet drainages | 2004, 2005 | July - Nov |
| 20 | | Log debris study | All | Owikeno Lake, Long Lake | 2004 | |
| 21 | | Instream Restoration | All | Rivers and Smith watersheds | Unknown | |
| 22 | | Wannock River estuary assessment | All | Wannock River | 2005 | |
| 23 | | Seal survey | All | Owikeno Lake, Wannock estuary, Wyclees Lagoon | 2005 | |
| 24 | | Early marine study | Sockeye | Smith Inlet, Rivers Inlet | 2004-2008 | |
| 25 | | Hatchery Feasibility Study | All | Owikeno Basin | Unknown | |

As you can see much has been accomplished. It is clear from the goals and objectives of the Recovery Plan that the task of assisting in the recovery of the salmon stocks was seen to be a long term, inclusive, open-ended process that included all of the stakeholders who expressed an interest in the recovery of these salmon stocks. The goal is to help restore these salmon stocks to a level where economic benefits can be experienced by the local communities.

**1. Discussion:**

Bruce made the point that the Recovery Plan clearly identifies that local communities would benefit from the recovered salmon stocks. The Wuikinuxv and the Gwas'ala Nakwaxda'xw have submitted a commercial harvesting plan for Rivers Inlet for 2006 to the DFO. There is no commercial harvesting being planned for Rivers Inlet in 2006, however there is a small commercial fishery expected for Smith Inlet. Dave Peacock responded that he supported First Nations having economic opportunities. It is clearly stated in the Wild Salmon Policy, that "Resource management processes and decisions will honour Canada's obligations to First Nations." Under the WSP , the DFO are trying to identify a watershed that could be used as a pilot project to test the implementation of an integrated eco-system based management plan. Dave suggested that the Rivers Inlet – Owikeno watershed would be a good candidate for a pilot project to demonstrate the integrated planning approach. The pilot project would take the WSP goals and objectives and translate them into an on the ground ecological habitat project. Mark Saunders is the DFO coordinator along with Paul Sprout , the DFO Regional Director General, who would coordinate such a pilot project. Dave Peacock said he would ask for the terms of reference for the pilot project. The project would gather all the relevant information on the present stock status, habitat and include the full range of stakeholders in the discussion. The decision will be decided by North Coast Regional Management. Gary Taccogna is involved in the WSP and looking after the habitat side.

Bruce said the Wuikinuxv were interested in the co-management pilot project, however he said the Wuikinuxv still want an opportunity to fish commercially if the sockeye returns are over 200,000. There was some discussion about the validity of the lower benchmark of 200,000. Dave Peacock said he was confident about the lower benchmark of 200,000 based on the Integrated Fish Management Plan. Bruce questioned the value of participating in a co-management board where the First Nations will be outnumbered and outvoted. How do we integrate the Wuikinuxv Nation's interests into the integrated harvesting plan? DFO has well defined management structure and it will not be changed easily. This WSP pilot project may be able to show how an integrated co-management board would work.

**2. Discussion of RSSEPS projects as listed in the Recovery Plan**.

# 7 – Hydrodynamic modeling: Funds from the Tulla Foundation will be used to allow the hydrodynamic modeling project to go ahead.

#8 – Adult sockeye enumeration:. Dave Peacock said he would like to see the extension of the coho count at the Docee River fence. This would require more funding.

#10 - & #11 – Juvenile Sockeye Survey: This is a valuable program. The money is not secure. Dave Peacock indicated that acoustic work in Owikeno is important and producing good results. It is possible that this work could be done by trained First Nations crew. Money needs to be identified for training and equipment purchase.

#13 Adult Chinook Enumeration: This project was not accepted for funding last year by the Northern Boundary Fund. They are interested in a broader application of the mark-recapture project. Ivan Winther will re-submit the mark-recapture proposal to the PSC next year. The Wannock Chinook have been wire tagged since 1999. This project is an important one and needs to be done for 2- 3 years.

#15 Coho Juvenile surveys: Coho surveys are no longer done on the Central Coast. There would need to be a review of the stock status to determine if juvenile surveys are needed again. There is some question that the surveys do not accurately identify Coho stressed populations.

#16 – Sockeye Enhancement: the results from the otolith reading are not completed yet. One box of otoliths were lost at the lab. In 2005 we collected otoliths from the Inziana and the Amback systems. The otoliths from the Inziana that have been read (1065) show a .24 % survival rate of marked fish, the percentage in 2004 was .27%. Added together, the survival of the enhanced contribution of the 2000 brood is 0.51%This shows that there was some value to the enhancement for conservation purposes. The effort was quite small for the whole system. The higher escapements in the Amback and the Inziana means a higher number of otolith samples would be needed which will make the project very costly in 2006 Further discussion focused on the expense of the project because of the high number of samples required to make the data valid.
It was agreed that we would finish reading the otoliths collected last year in order to properly evaluate the contribution of the enhancement program. Bruce commented that the hatchery program was not worth doing if the returns only equal the average bio-standards ratio of survival. Bruce offered to use his AFS budget towards the otolith collection for 2006. He would like to see Wuikinuxv people trained in reading the otoliths. He wants us to pursue funding options for otolith collections for 2006, 2007.
Sandie discussed the Genesee Creek fence counting project. She pointed out that the number of marked fish recovered did not really justify the expense of the fence.
It was agreed that Bruce would fund next year's otolith collection from his AFS budget and that RSSEPS would make the effort to find the funding for reading them.

#17 Lake Limnology Monitoring: There was an up date done on Owikeno Lake in 2000 by Mat Mortimer. It would be useful to do it again to compare the data with previous results. The survey included food production for fry, photosynthesis rates and water quality. Limnology has not been a priority because it is not lake conditions that have contributed to reduction of salmon populations. Rick Routledge talked about evidence from the core samples. This evidence shows that there has been big changes in the salmon populations of the lake over time. A reduction in salmon populations coincides with the advent of the commercial fishery. The evidence from the Long Lake core does not show any benefits from the fertilization of the lake. The juveniles coming out of Owikeno Lake are a good size so the limnology studies have not been a high priority. Rick commented on the degree on glacial retreat due to climate change. He said that the Smoke House glacier would not last and that this will have repercussions on the lake and the salmon habitat.

#20 Log Debris Removal Owikeno/Long Lake: Karl updated us on the work on the Machmell Flats debris situation. The debris problem depends on which species you are considering. There is no evidence that sockeye spawn there but it is used by coho as a rearing area so there is no point in removing the debris. For Long Lake we need more information on the spawning area affected by logging debris to see if removal will actually improve the spawning area. Karl commented on the Machmell Channel. WFP is pulling out of Owikeno Lake after June so he has been working to try and resolve the issues with the channel. He suggested that the intake be deactivated and the channel deepened to create more ground water in the channel. The channel will then be useful as a rearing area.

**3. Partnership Review:**

Bruce repeated the Wuikinuxv concerns that RSSEPS was not meeting the needs of the Wuikinuxv Nation. Decisions made by DFO have been a problem. For example, after deciding to include Wuikinuxv crew in the juvenile survey last winter, the survey went ahead without any Wuikinuxv v involvement. As well RSSEPS has lost its funding from the PSF which weakens RSSEPS ability to carry out projects. Dave Peacock pointed out that issues with First Nations should be dealt with on a negotiated government to government basis and is outside the RSSEPS mandate. RSSEPS has an impressive list of accomplishments but funding is now an issue.

In addition to funding issues, there are issues of membership, structure, and mandate. Karl called for more public involvement in the larger membership. Lewis Bublé stated his support for the Society. He suggested that we get someone from the Canadian Salmon Advisory Board to be in the Society to represent the commercial fishing sector as he is no longer able to put in the time. The province is getting more interested in fisheries and may be a source of funding. He felt that the role of the Society to serve as clearing house for fishing issues was important. Dave Peacock reiterated DFO's commitment d to the Recovery Plan. The question is: have the stocks sufficiently recovered? Rick Routledge suggested it would be good to have more representation from the research community. He suggested Sean Cox from SFU, Daniel Pauly from UBC Fisheries, Jackie Alder from UBC Fisheries, and Vince Pokeroff from UBC. In addition, he suggested we need a member from the Sports Fishing Advisory Board. Karl expressed the view that Smith Inlet has not benefited from the programs as much as Rivers Inlet. He would also like to see someone from the Provincial Ministry of the Environment, for example Mike Ramsey from the Williams Lake Office. It was suggested we get someone from the non-lodge sports fishing community. Sandie suggested we should try and involve more local people like Robin Cooper, Bob Bachen and Vern Sampson. We could also try to engage the forest companies in the Society but since WFP is leaving the area they are not likely to be interested. David read out a letter form the Raincoast Conservation Society expressing an interest in becoming more involved in RSSEPS. Their involvement would be welcome as they are already involved in salmon research in the Central Coast.

It was suggested that we should review the recommendations from the CCLRMP and see if there are any areas of common concern. There will be some funding coming to the

Wuikinuxv Nation from the CIII which is conservation funds that resulted from the CCLRMP. Dave Peacock agreed to continue on as a member of the Technical Advisory Committee. He suggested that Siegi Kriegl, Area Director , North Coast, would serve as technical advisor to our Management Board replacing Gary Taccogna.

**4. Discussion on Proposed Projects**

The following projects were discussed:

-continuation of Early Marine Survival research
-Rivers Inlet echo sounding project
-Smith Inlet digital atlas of salmon sensitive atlas
-otolith reading of Amback returns in 2006.
-Limnology studies of Owikeno & Long Lakes
-Juvenile Surveys
-research for understanding salmon ocean survival
-habitat evaluation reports for Rivers & Smith Inlet
-investigating possible connections with the POST research

Lewis said it was important not to lose all the good work that has been done by RSSEPS. Sandie said that the Recovery Plan provides a basis for moving forward. Plans do change; we need to define our priorities more clearly. Bruce pointed out that there have been problems in trying to increase the First Nations involvement in fisheries management. Dave Peacock said it was important to incorporate all the historical data from juvenile surveys and variations in fry distribution to get a big picture of fry distribution in both lakes. There is still a problem with getting accurate escapement numbers in Owikeno Lake. Bruce pointed out the importance of doing more off-shore research on marine survival. He referred to Ron Tanasachucks's work in Barkley Sound and the fact that Rivers Sockeye spend a good part of their adult life in Queen Charlotte Sound. The monitoring of climate change is also an important task for RSSEPS. This would include tracking of water temperature changes, siltation rates and rates of glacial retreats and hydrodynamic modeling.

Nigel Haggan sent a letter outlining his thoughts on a vision and structure fro RSSEPS. It was emailed to all of the members. There was some discussion on this broad ecosystem framework recommended by Nigel. It was agreed that more specific details on how this would work are needed before we can evaluate this proposal.

Karl pointed out that we need to discuss with the GNN ways that continued membership in the Society will benefit them. David will follow up with Doug McCorquodale and Colleen Hemphill.

It was agreed that we would meet again on June 1, 2006 in Vancouver. We will try and expand the membership in the Society. We will try to prioritize the projects for 2006 and discuss funding strategies.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45.