

RIVERS SMITH SALMON ECOSYSTEMS PLANNING SOCIETY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 10, 2006

Conference Call

9:00 a.m. to 10:55

Present:

Karl Wilson, David Stevenson, Bob Bocking, Steve Cox-Rogers, Sharon Chow, Barry Peters, Julian Sturhahn, Sandie MacLaurin

1. Review of 2005 projects

The projects for 2005 were as follows

1.	Sockeye Enhancement Evaluation	\$13,000
2.	Early Marine Survival	\$40,000
3.	Docee Fence	\$8,000
4.	Sensitive Habitat Survey	\$10,000
5.	Owikeno Basin Coho DNA Project.	\$10,000
6.	Project Coordination	\$47,000

In addition, we identified the need for more work to be done on juvenile sockeye abundance estimates in Owikeno Lake. Since this activity was to take place in 2006 we did not include it in our 2005 budget.

2. Northern Boundary Fund

We had two applications to the Northern Boundary Fund approved to the second stage of the application process. They are

1. Evaluation and development of in-season abundance estimator for sockeye using echo sounding in Rivers Inlet
2. Continuation of evaluation of the sockeye supplementation program by establishing a counting fence on the Genesee River.
3. Wannock River chinook adult mark/recapture program (DFO/Wuikinuxv)

These applications will be decided at a meeting of the PSC on February 2 & 3.

In previous discussions, the TAC also identified the following projects as important:

- Radio telemetry study of Rivers Inlet sockeye to determine relative proportions escaping to spawning areas
- Radio telemetry study of chinook salmon in Rivers inlet
- Evaluation of chinook spawning habitat in Long lake

3. Discussions of 2006 Projects

The possible projects for 2006 were discussed.

The Sockeye Enhancement Evaluation project for 2005 remains unfinished. There were 2,450 otoliths collected. They will not be read until February and March so that the results will not be known until April. The cost of reading the otoliths is \$8. per reading

for a total of \$19,600. There is just enough in the budget to cover this cost as we had budgeted \$13,000 for this in 2005, plus we had \$6,000 surplus from the previous year. There are no plans for the DFO to carry out another sockeye egg take in Owikeno Lake in 2006.

The plan to build a fish counting fence on the Genesee Creek was discussed. Conservation enhancement of sockeye salmon from seven tributaries of the Owikeno Lake Basin, including Genesee Creek was initiated in brood year 2000 to support a sockeye recovery plan. This plan recommended that enhancement be evaluated to determine its efficacy as a tool for stock recovery, thus guiding decisions about future program direction and allocation of resources.

The Genesee Creek sockeye enumeration fence project will employ use of a temporary aluminum broomstick style in-stream barrier and trap combination to catch, enumerate and mark adult sockeye salmon migrating upstream to spawn during late August – October and to recover carcasses for sampling post spawning. The purpose of the project is to obtain an exact count of adult sockeye migrating to Genesee Creek and determine by sampling, the contribution of enhanced fish.

The application for this project has been submitted to the Northern boundary fund in the amount of \$42,175. The question was asked if we will need funds to read another 500 otoliths; if so, then this is one project that RSSEPS could try and fund. However, the 2005 brood year fish will not be thermally marked because of warmer winter temperatures. These fish will have their adipose fin clipped. The question was asked about future funding as the 2005 brood fish will return in 2009. Will funding for the fence be available then? The Northern Boundary Fund will fund multi-year projects but it will be based on the results of the first year. The cost of fin clipping the Genesee fish will be \$3500.

-clarification- in the funding request for 2006 there are funds for reading an estimated 200 otoliths requested and if RSSEPS can assist with any additional otolith reading or all of it, this will increase the length of time the fence can be operated. Adult sockeye from enhanced fish which are thermally marked will return in years 2006 - 2009 (releases from brood 2001-2004 broods). As well, returns in 2008/2009 and possibly 2010 (if 2005 brood are AD clipped) to Genesee Creek will also show a physical mark (AD clip).

The Sensitive Habitat Survey is not yet complete. The maps indicating spawning and rearing habitat will be in an atlas that will reside on the DFO's Community Mapping Network. It should be finished at the end of January. We are planning AGM meeting in February at which time the consultants will make a presentation of the atlas and demonstrate how it works. It was suggested that there may be a need to ground truth some of the data on the Sensitive Habitat Survey. It is understood that the atlas will be an ongoing project that will need to be updated periodically.

The juvenile Sockeye abundance survey was discussed. DFO has identified 14K for it in their budget to do both Long Lake and Oweekeno Lake trawls. Previous TAC meetings had identified the importance and the need to augment the traditional juvenile survey.

Julian agreed to talk to Kim Hyatt to discuss the need for more resources for the juvenile survey.

The Early Marine Survival research headed by Rick Routledge was discussed. Due to global climate, change marine survival of salmonids will continue to be a big problem. We are looking forward to the publication of Shauna's MA thesis which will present the research results. This is important work which will need our continued support. David agreed to contact Rick to get a proposal for 2006.

The echo sounding proposal to the Northern Boundary Fund for Rivers sockeye was discussed. It is high on the DFO's list of projects so there is every chance that it will be approved. RSSEPS and the Wuikinuxv Nation are identified as funding partners in the application to the Northern Boundary Fund.

There was some discussion about chinook projects for 2006. Previous research and discussions indicate that there is some concern about chinook spawning habitat in Long Lake. Doug agreed to consult with the GNN to see what their priorities were.

Sandie pointed out that the Wannock chum run was a concern of the Wuikinuxv. They tried to find some last Fall for brood stock but they were unsuccessful. There was only one Wannock chum found and none were found in the dead pitch. Transplanting from other stocks is a possibility but there are concerns about following the proper protocols and finding the appropriate donor stocks. The Wannock chum remain a stock of concern.

The Docee Fence capacity building project was discussed. This remains a high priority for the GNN. RSSEPS will continue to support it.

Karl asked for a spread sheet to identify past and proposed projects along with a time line and costs. We will have our AGM early in February and it would be useful to have such a spreadsheet to guide discussion. David agreed to provide the spreadsheet. Karl pointed out that we need to prioritize the 2006 projects based on the goals set out in the Recovery Plan. PSF did do an evaluation of the RSSEPS as part of their review of the Salmon Recovery Plan program. RSSEPS scored well on meeting its targets and delivering project deliverables on time and on budget. However, we have not received a copy of this evaluation to distribute to the membership. We need to have a clear list of prioritized projects for 2006 in order to approach potential donors.

The benchmarks discussed at our Nov 10 2005 meeting were discussed. They have yet to be finalized by DFO who are in a consultation process with the Wuikinuxv and Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nations to finalize these numbers. In addition, we need to be aware of the DFO process to finalize the Stock Assessment Frameworks and the AFS projects of the Wuikinuxv and Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nations. The Wuikinuxv have expressed an interest in a counting fence on the Amback (or Qwap) Creek. The Amback may be a better indicator stream than the Genesee. As well, the Wuikinuxv and Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nations have expressed an interest in a First Nation only commercial next year assuming that the sockeye returns are sufficient.

We will need another conference call to further discuss our 2006 projects. It will be on February 2 at 9:30 a.m. to further define our 2006 projects. We need to have these identified in order have a strategic financial planning session at the AGM Tentative date for the AGM is February 8 in Vancouver. Further TAC meetings may be necessary after the AGM to finalize the projects for 2006. Fund raising will commence after projects are finalized.

The conference call was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.