

Introduction:

This report outlines the activities carried out by the Rivers Smith Salmon Ecosystems Salmon Planning Society in 2006/2007. Despite financial constraints the society was able to accomplish a great deal. The RSSEPS was constituted under the BC Societies Act on August 21, 2003. Currently the organizational membership includes:

- Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw First Nation
- Wuikinuxv First Nation
- Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- District of Port Hardy
- Raincoast Conservation Society
- Rivers Inlet North Coast Salmon Enhancement Association. (RINCSEA)
- SFU Centre for Coastal Studies.
- Sports Fishing Lodge operators
- Commercial Fishers representative (to be determined)
- Tula Foundation

The RSSEPS has a management committee of three which for 2006 is Bruce Burrows representing the Wuikinuxv First Nation, Colleen Hemphill representing the Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw First Nations, and Misty MacDuffee of the Raincoast Conservation Society.

The RSSEPS also has as a Technical Advisory Team which consists of DFO staff with expertise in Rivers and Smith Salmon stocks, representatives from the two First Nations, Rick Routledge from SFU and Bob Bocking from LGL Ltd., Environmental Consultants. The RSSEPS has a half-time coordinator who is responsible for project development and management, fund raising and communications. The current coordinator for the RSSEPS is David Stevenson

RSSEPS grew out of a number of initiatives by First Nations, public agencies, forest companies, environmental and stewardship organizations, local governments, fishing interests and concerned individuals, undertaken in response to serious declines in salmon stocks in Rivers and Smith Inlets. Our mission statement is:

We see the salmon of Rivers and Smith, and their ecosystems, restored to health and to a level of optimal productivity. We see the full potential values of the salmon and their ecosystems realized for individual and community development including economic benefits. We envision the continuing development of cooperation in the work of recovery and stewardship.

In March of 2006, we had our AGM, at which we reviewed the partnership consensus of RSSEPS. We re-examined our mandate and our goals and decided to continue as a Society. Our focus now includes sustainable ecosystem based planning as well as Recovery Projects.

2006 Projects

- **Smith Inlet Sensitive Habitat Atlas** – this will be a digital atlas showing the sensitive spawning habitat of salmon species in the Smith Inlet Long Lake watersheds. It will be housed on the Community Mapping Network which is accessible from our web page: www.rsseps.ca. It will be in addition to the Rivers Inlet Sensitive Habitat Atlas. The project will be finished by December 31, 2006. It is funded by the Tula Foundation in conjunction with the PSF.
- **Early Marine Productivity Studies** – this research is done by Dr. Rick Routledge of Simon Fraser University. He is studying the growth of plankton populations in the inlets and their affect on juvenile salmon as they migrate to the ocean. We have supported this important research for 4 years as we hope it will provide us with an indicator of adult salmon abundance. This project was funded this year by the Tula Foundation in conjunction with the PSF.
- **Rivers Echo Sounding Project** – This project served as an in-season indicator of adult sockeye returns. It was a partnership between RSSEPS , Wuikinuxv Nation, and LGL Consulting. It was funded by the Northern Boundary Fund of the Pacific Salmon Commission.
- **Sockeye Enhancement Evaluation** -
The objective of the enhancement evaluation project in year 4 is to complete an assessment of brood 2000/2001 for Amback sockeye that started in return year 2004. The goal is to determine if sockeye fry augmentation through application of conservation enhancement techniques is making a contribution to adult escapements, to estimate what that contribution is and overall ocean survival of enhanced fish. This will required reading approximately 3,000 otoliths from sockeye carcasses. This project is funded by the Tula Foundation in conjunction with the PSF.
- **Docee Fence Co-management Project.**
This was the fourth year that we have contributed to the Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nations capacity building co-management project at the Docee Fence.
- **Project Coordination** –
Funding for 2007 is being generously provided by the Tula Foundation.

Northern Boundary Fund.

The Pacific Salmon Commission is joint USA/Canadian body which provides funding for projects on enhancing salmon stocks of interest to both countries. After a series of conference calls the TAC agreed to submit the following sockeye proposals for funding to the Northern Boundary Fund:

- Rivers Inlet Echo Sounding Project
- Wannock River Hydro Acoustic Enumeration using Didson Hydro Acoustic technology
- Smith Chinook Mark Recapture

The PSC agreed to fund the Rivers Echo Sounding Project and the Smith Chinook Mark Recapture project. Funding for the Wannock River Hydro Acoustic Enumeration project will have to be found from private Foundations.

Wild Salmon Policy Pilot Project

Rivers Inlet is being considered as a pilot project to implement the Wild salmon Policy of the DFO. There is a 5 step planning process to determine conservation units, and the biological, social and economic indicators for each species. The object is to determine management strategies for each species with input from First Nations and other stakeholders to restore and maintain healthy and diverse salmon populations.

Rivers Ecosystem Study Project

The Tula Foundation has expressed an interest in funding a major ecosystem study of Rivers Inlet. Rick Routledge has put together a draft proposal. This study will have study with many components; substrate, glaciology changes, glacial systems and zooplankton. The main focus will be on fjord ecology and hydro dynamics but will also include other sockeye lakes such as Long Lake and Elizabeth Lake at Koeve.

Climate Change Monitoring - We continue to be concerned about the effects of Global warming on the salmon stocks. We will continue to support the planning of research on the impacts of climate change on fish stocks in the Central Coast. The Tula Foundation has expressed an interest in funding an ecosystem based research project for Rivers and Smith Inlets. Rick Routledge is chairing a committee to determine what research projects will be considered.

Conclusion:

The RSSEPS is a partnership group dedicated to the full recovery of the salmon stocks of Rivers and Smith Inlets. The Wuikinuxv and Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nations play an important role in this partnership. We will continue to inform to local communities of our progress. Reports on all of our projects, our Recovery Plan and minutes from our meetings can be viewed by clicking on our web page: www.rsseps.ca

David Stevenson
Coordinator RSSEPS