



Rivers and Smith Salmon Ecosystems Planning Society

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Interim Report
to the

Pacific Salmon Foundation

Mar 04

1. Introduction to RSSEPS

The **Rivers and Smith Salmon Ecosystems Planning Society** was constituted under the BC Societies Act on August 21, 2003. This represented formalization of an entity that has existed since mid 2000 for purposes of convening different parties and interests to pursue the common goal of stewardship for salmon and their ecosystems.

The **Rivers and Smith Salmon Ecosystems Planning Group (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. In August 2000 what turned out to be an inaugural meeting of the group took place at Rivers Inlet (Wuikinuxv, formerly Oweekeno, Village) to consider a draft recovery plan for sockeye which had collapsed precipitously in both Rivers and Smith Inlets. The group has adopted a vision statement as follows:

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.

2. Membership in the RSSEPS

As of mid 2003, the organizational membership included:

- Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw First Nation
- Wuikinuxv First Nation
- Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- District of Port Hardy
- Sierra Club of BC

- UBC Fisheries Centre
- Western Forest Products Ltd.
- International Forest Products Ltd.
- Coastal Ecosystems Research Foundation
- Rivers Inlet-Hakai Pass Sportfishing Association

One commercial fisherman also sits on the RSPG although he does not purport to officially represent any part of or the whole of the commercial fishing sector. Generally, however, most of the people at the table are representatives of an identifiable organization, community or group.

Membership in the RSSEEPS is open to those agencies and groups interested in furthering the goals of the Society. Basically, acceptance by the others and a commitment to support and implement the salmon recovery plan are enough to be part of this body. New organizational members are added at the discretion and with the consensus of the existing ones.

3. Structure

The RSSEEPS has a management committee of three which for 2004 is Bruce Burrows representing the Wuikinuxv First Nation, Colleen Hemphill representing the Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw First Nations, and Sharon Chow from the Sierra Club of BC. Gary Taccogna of the DFO is a Technical Advisor to the Management Committee. The RSSEEPS also has as a Technical Advisory Team which consists of DFO staff with expertise in Rivers and Smith Salmon stocks, fisheries biologists, plus scientists from UBC and SFU. The RSSEEPS has a half-time coordinator who is responsible for project Development and Management, Fund Raising and Communications. The current coordinator for the RSSEEPS is David Stevenson

4. Funding

In 2002, the RSSEEPS received funding from the Pacific Salmon Foundation to develop a salmon Recovery Plan and to carry out field work in the summer of 2003. The money comes from the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund (PSEF). The PSEF is an innovative and permanent long-term source of funding that was established with the federal government's contribution of \$30 million - part of the Pacific Fisheries Adjustment and Restructuring Program announced in 1998. The fund's investment interest is used to support salmon recovery in priority areas of BC and the Yukon.

5. 2003 Projects

In 2003, funding from the Pacific Salmon Foundation was used to fund:

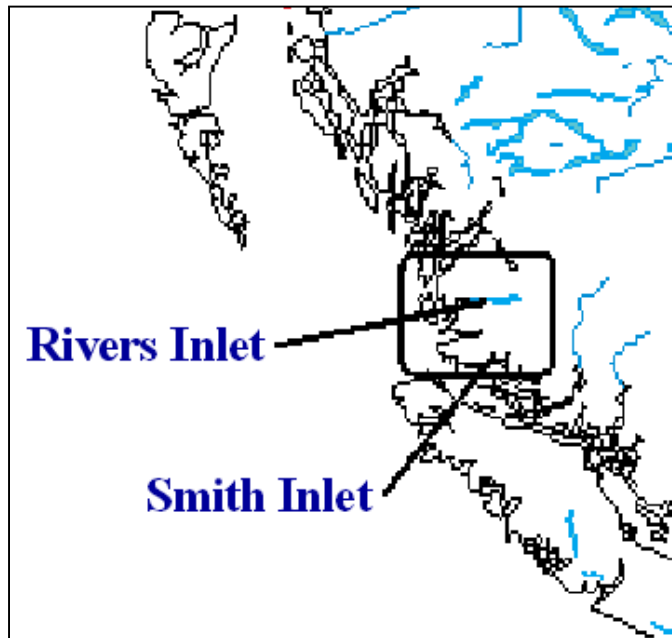
- RS 2, the development of a Recovery Plan for Rivers and Smith salmon
- RS1, the Coordination and Information Project,
- RS 3, Hydroacoustic Adult Enumeration project in the Wannock River

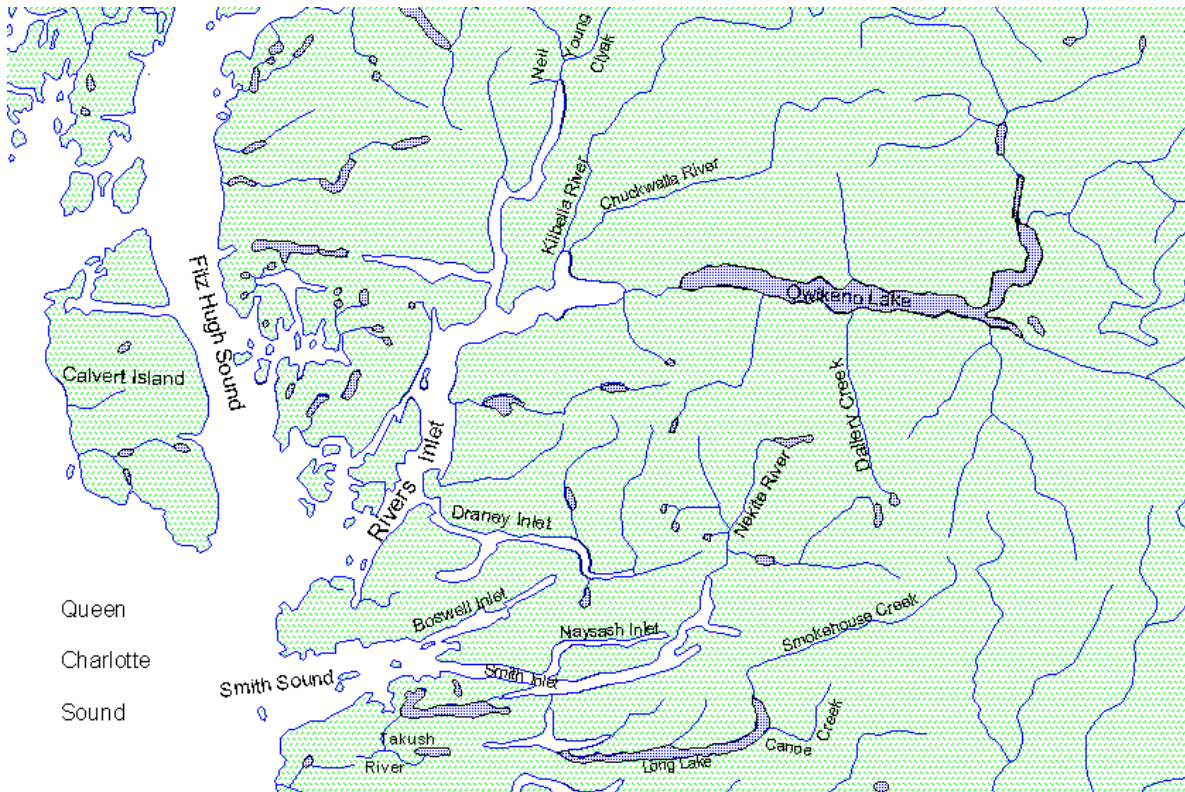
- RS 4, Juvenile Habitat Marine Survival Study in Rivers and Smith Inlets
- RS 5, Docee Fence Co-management Capacity building in Long Lake
- RS 6, Long Lake Juvenile Assessment

Reports on these projects can be viewed on the Society's web page. Other funding for field projects in 2003 came from the DFO Stock Assessment Program and the DFO Habitat and Enhancement Program.

6. Geographic Focus

The stocks (and their ecosystems) which are the focal point of RSSEPS's efforts originate in the rivers flowing into Owikeno and Long Lakes on BC's Central Coast. The first map below indicates the approximate location of Rivers and Smith Inlets while the second enumerates the major river and stream systems.





7. 2004 Activities

The year began with the hiring of David Stevenson as the new coordinator for RSSEPS. The Society signed a contract with the Pacific Salmon Foundation in December 2003 for \$52,000 to enable the coordination and information activities to be carried out. The Society has since had two full member meetings and the Technical Advisory committee has met twice. The Coordinator set up a new bank account and hired a bookkeeper. Laura Hughes of Eby's Business Services in Comox has agreed to do the work.

The coordinator facilitated the completion of the 2003 field projects. The reports for each project were submitted and the contribution agreements were finalized with the PSF. The major accomplishment of the Society this year has been the complete revision of an earlier draft of the Recovery Plan for the Salmon of Rivers and Smith Inlet. Thanks are due to Doug McCorquodale for his work on the revision. This Recovery Plan clearly defines the problems and the challenges facing the Society in realizing its goal of restoring the salmon stocks to healthy levels. The final report has been submitted to the PSF for copying and binding. It will be used as a guide for all of our field activities and as a tool for further funding.

The web page for the RSSEPS has been revised and the information on it has been updated. The web page will be the main vehicle for communicating with

the general public on our activities. It will contain reports on our field activities, minutes of our meetings and the current Recovery Plan. The web page is being managed by Submit Services of Port Hardy.

The RSSEPS has formed a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to inform its decisions on implementing the Recovery Plan. The TAC consists of fisheries technicians and biologists from the DFO, scientists specializing in fish technology and First Nation representatives. Terms of Reference for the TAC have been developed and approved. The purpose of the TAC is to provide the RSSEPS with timely accurate data on state of the salmon stocks, make recommendations on recovery strategies and provide technical supervision to the projects carried out by RSSEPS. The RSSEPS Coordinator chairs the meetings; provides background, and records proceedings.

The TAC consists of DFO staff with expertise in Rivers and Smith Salmon stocks, fisheries biologists, plus scientists from UBC and SFU. Membership in the TAC is contingent on approval by the RSSEPS membership and is based on the applicant's ability to contribute to the planning process. The current Technical Advisory Committee consists of:

- Bob Bocking Fisheries Consultant for the Pacific Salmon Foundation
- Bruce Burrows - Wuikinuxv Nation
- Nigel Haggan - UBC Fisheries Centre
- Jonathan Hepples - Stock Assessment Biologist for DFO
- Sandie MacLaurin - Community Advisor for DFO
- Doug McCorquodale - biologist for Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw First Nations
- Richard Routledge - Director of Environmental Science SFU
- Gary Taccogna - HEB Bio for DFO

The RSSEPS is planning the following field activities for 2004.

1. The third year of a hydro acoustic enumeration of Wannock River salmon.
- \$50,000
- 2) Long Lake Chinook critical habitat study - \$5,000
- 3) Assemble all data on spawning and rearing of Salmon in Rivers and Smith Inlets from all sources, \$5,000
- 4) A limnology study of the zooplankton communities for both lakes \$5,000
- 5) Continue study of early marine survival - \$50,000.

Also under consideration is a feasibility study for a hatchery at or near Oweekeno Village to rear sockeye. All of our field activities will be carried out in conjunction with other field activities conducted by the DFO. These projects have not been ratified by the full membership of the Society. The final choices will be made by the end of April. The RSSEPS is grateful to the PSF for its continued financial support.

David Stevenson
RSSEPS Coordinator