

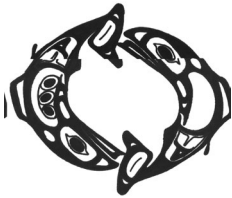
Rivers and Smith Salmon Ecosystems Planning Society

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RSSEPS Update September 2005

1. This report is to update RSSEPS members on the activities of the Society since our last meeting in February.. One meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a series of conference calls were held to finalize the 2005 field projects. The content of these meetings is available on our web page: rsseps.ca

2005 Projects

2. The following projects were agreed upon for the 2005 budget.
 1. Sockeye Enhancement Evaluation \$ 13,000
The objective of the enhancement evaluation project in year two is to complete an assessment of brood 2000 Inziana and 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.
 2. Early Marine Survival \$ 40,000
This is the project headed by Dr. Rick Routledge from SFU. It is the third year that we have contributed to this project. The project focuses on demonstrating the relationship between plankton levels, water conditions and the size of sockeye smolts in Rivers Inlet. The objective is to develop a predictor model for early marine survival.
 3. Docee Fence \$ 8,000
This is the third year that we have contributed to the Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nations capacity building co-management project at the Docee Fence.
 4. Sensitive Habitat Survey \$ 10,000
It was agreed to put out an RFP to identify the sensitive habitat for all salmonids in the Owikeno Watershed. The results would be displayed on a digital atlas posted on the Community Mapping Network web page. Violet Komori and Don Chamberlain were awarded the contract. The deadline for the project is December 31 2005. We will have a demonstration of the atlas at our meeting in January.
 5. Owikeno Basin Coho DNA Baseline Sampling Project. - \$10,000
The objective is to collect DNA information to build a baseline data for Coho stocks that spawn in tributaries of Oweekeno Lake. Increasing sample sizes in the DNA

baseline will increase our ability to discriminate between stocks when DNA is collected from different fisheries. Overall, collecting samples for the baseline will contribute to the final goal of stock-specific in-season abundance management. Samples could then be collected from any fishery and compared to the baseline in order to protect weak stocks and help in targeting more productive stocks.

The money for this project was originally earmarked for a Juvenile Abundance Survey in Owikeno Lake. Since this survey has to be done in the winter months of January to March, the PSF suggested that it would be best to use our 2006 budget for it, so the TAC chose this project to complete the 2005 budget.

5. Project Coordination \$ 47,000

This budget is to pay the Coordinator and to ensure all meetings, proposals, budgets and field activities are clearly recorded and reported to the membership. All of our minutes from meetings and conference calls, reports and proposal are posted on our web page.

The total budget required is \$128,000. The amount available from the Pacific Salmon Foundation is \$120,000. We have \$10,000 surplus from the 2004 budget for a total budget of \$130,000.

3. **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:

1. Evaluation and development of juvenile sockeye abundance estimation methods in Owikeno Lake This is the same proposal as discussed above; if we get funding from the Northern Boundary Fund then we can re-allocate the funds for this activity in our 2006 budget.
2. Evaluation and development of in-season abundance estimator using echo sounding in Rivers Inlet.
3. Continuation of evaluation of sockeye enhancement program
This would consist of the construction of a stick fence on the Genesee Creek to get an accurate count of returning spawners. These numbers would be used as an index of returns to other streams.
4. Radio telemetry study of Rivers Inlet Sockeye to determine relative proportions of fish escaping to spawning areas

4. **Productive Capacity Review:**

As part of our 2004 projects we commissioned a paper on the productive capacity of Owikeno and Long Lake Basins. This work was completed by Pacificus Consulting. The paper "**Productive Capacity of Salmonids in the Owikeno and Long Lake Basins**" is available on our web page. This paper was sent out to the following biologists for review.

Bob Bocking/Dave Peacock for general comments
Coho: Joel Sawada for Coho comments
Ivan Winther for Chinook comments
Steve Cox-Rogers for Sockeye comments
Brian Spilsted for Pin/chum comments
Dana Atagi for Steel Head comments

It was agreed that once all review comments were received we would ask Pacificus Consulting to incorporate them into the report. The revised report will provide the basis for our TAC meeting in November. This meeting will initiate a discussion on abundance targets and benchmarks for sockeye.

The DFO are committed to implementing the Wild Salmon Policy from areas 1 to 10 by next year. The objective is to "Identify Conservation Units and Develop criteria to assess CU's and identify benchmarks to represent biological status." The DFO is also committed to doing a core stock assessment review. This is being funded by the PSF and DFO. Finally DFO needs to develop a revised management plan consistent with the DFO IFMP development schedule, while allowing sufficient time for detailed consultation with First Nations, DFO advisory groups and other interested parties including the RSSEPS. The goal is to identify the Conservation Units within one year. The sockeye stocks of Owikeno and Long Lakes are already considered a CU. However, work needs to be done on Chinook, Coho Pinks and Chum.

At our November meeting, we will discuss the target numbers for next year which would include a review of existing target numbers. Sockeye is a priority over other species. Both Owikeno and Long Lake watersheds are considered conservation units for sockeye, the conservation units for chum and pinks would be much larger. DNA analysis for each species is used in determining conservation units. There is a PSARC paper being planned on conservation units.

It was agreed that we would hold a meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee in Vancouver in November to review the abundance targets for Sockeye and if time permits Chinook. We need to review the data on the productive capacity of the system and begin a discussion of benchmark numbers for managing the stocks.

The DFO is undertaking a consultative process with First Nations, advisory groups and RSSEPS to arrive at a consensus on benchmarks. Steve Cox Rogers and Julian Sturhahn are working on a PSARC paper to review the escapement goals for Long Lake sockeye. They will also work together to provide background information on Sockeye targets for the November meeting.

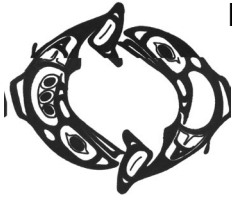
5. RSSEPS has been invited to attend a conference on climate change which is being held at the University of Victoria at the end of October. We will be part of a discussion on "Salmon Recovery Planning and Implications of Climate Change"

The objectives of this session are:

- 1) To highlight how climate change is significantly impacting salmon habitat, migratory patterns and behaviour, species mix, and bio-physical factors critical to salmon survival;
- 2) To reinforce the key role water conservation and planning will play in the preservation of salmon in watersheds; and
- 3) To present how government agencies, First Nations, salmon recovery teams, stewardship groups, water use management planning teams, and other organizations are planning to meet the challenges of salmon conservation and climate change.

The Coordinator of RSSEPS, David Stevenson will attend along with a member of the Technical Advisory Committee.

If you have any questions or comments on any of the above then please give me call. Thanks



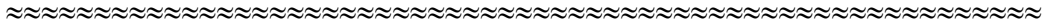
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