

**RIVERS SMITH SALMON ECOSYSTEMS PLANNING SOCIETY**  
**AGM SUMMARY**  
**May 11, 2010**

**Those Present:**

Sandi MacLaurin -DFO  
Tim Ennis - Nature Conservancy of Canada  
Dave Peacock – DFO Stock Assessment  
Donna Gault -WEDCO  
David Stevenson - RSSEPS Coordinator  
Cindy Hanuse - Wuikinuxv Fisheries Manager  
Ted Walkus – Good Hope Cannery  
Andrew Johnson - Wuikinuxv Marine Use Planning  
Doug McCorquodale, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Fisheries Manager  
Colleen Hemphill, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Chief Negotiator  
Karl Wilson DFO Biologist  
Misty McDuffee - Raincoast Conservation Society  
Jennifer Russel – Pacificus Environmental Consulting  
Nicole McLelland, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Lands, Resource & Treaty Mgr  
Hilary Ibey - DFO PNCIMA  
Aaron Heidt - Coastal First Nation – Marine Use Planning

**1. Coordinator's Update**

***Funding:***

David gave a brief update on the status of RSSEPS. The RSSEPS financial records have been reviewed and the summary financial statements have been accepted by the Management Committee. It was agreed at the Management Committee meeting that surplus funds from 2009 projects would be transferred to support the 2010 administration account.

David Stevenson provided a brief summary of RSSEPS funding to date and reported that present funding, previously provided by Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Tula Foundation, will discontinue at the end of this fiscal year. Funds for administration will run out prior to the end of the fiscal year. PSF has indicated that funding for RSSEPS is possible in 2011. Since RSSEPS does not have charitable status, we have a partnership agreement with the PSF to pursue funding opportunities. PSF will submit a proposal to the Vancouver Foundation on behalf of RSSEPS in June.

We recently submitted a funding proposal to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund to undertake watershed planning for the Rivers Inlet and Smith Inlet watersheds. Unfortunately our proposal was not successful.

Since 2004, the RSSEPS has implemented many successful projects. Our partners include: The Gwa'sala Nakwaxdaxw Nations, the Wuikinuxv Nation, the DFO, the District of Port Hardy, Rain Forest Conservation Society, UBC Fisheries Centre, Rivers Inlet North Coast Salmon Enhancement Association, Simon Fraser University, Department of Environmental Science and other individuals who have an interest in the recovery of the Salmon stocks of Smith and Rivers Inlet.

### ***Projects for 2010 - 2011***

We continue to work with our partners to implement the following projects:

1. Johnston Creek Coho Enhancement Project
2. Wannock Chinook Enhancement Project
3. Nekite Chum Mark Recapture Project
4. Watershed Fish Sustainability Plans for Rivers Inlet and Smith Inlet
5. Wild Salmon Policy implementation
6. Wuikinuxv Hatchery for propagation Coho and Chinook
7. Salmon Hydro-acoustic Enumeration on the Wannock River

### **2. WSP Benchmarks**

Misty MacDuffee of the Rain Forest Conservation Society provided an update on Wild Salmon Policy Benchmarks which looks at stock/recruitment curves. Although, the scientists at the Pacific Biological Station are advocating this approach, it produces uncertain results which tend to overestimate productivity and underestimate spawn capacity. Misty has done Stock Recruitment curves for areas 9 & 10 and has demonstrated that the S-R model is inadequate for determining benchmarks. She concludes that it would be better to use habitat capacity and work backwards to get stock-recruitment curves. Dave Peacock said that the relationship between spawners and recruitment was uncertain but it does exist. There was some discussion on how to determine escapement targets and variable exploitation rates. Variable exploitation rates are now being proposed. It was agreed that the overall approach requires further discussion. The challenge is to secure adequate funding for monitoring. A strategic approach could be to minimize information requirements and fish more conservatively.

### **3. Review of 2009 Projects – Proposed 2010 Projects**

#### ***Nekite Chum - Doug McCorquodale***

Various projects were conducted on the Nekite River mainstem as part of the overall enumeration program. The mark-recapture program, a procedure used for collecting escapement data, was initiated on August 26. Marking on this occasion occurred using beach seine nets in a tidally influenced area within the Lower Nekite River. Fish were marked using Floy tag and received an opercular punch as a secondary mark, and had their sex and condition recorded. All fish were released after marking in roughly the same location as where they were captured. A total of 1,172 chum salmon were marked over 17 separate tagging events.

Recapture of the marked chum salmon was conducted by dead-pitching of the entire anadromous portion of the Nekite River mainstem, the Nekite River spawning channel, and the Piper River (a major tributary of the Nekite River) mainstem. Deadpitching began on September 3 and was conducted until October 6, once the chum salmon run had subsided. All fish dead-pitched were examined for the presence of a tag or secondary mark, and random samples of chum salmon were sampled for post-orbital hypural length, gender, and scale samples. Low Chum numbers and low water levels have been challenges.

### ***Discussion Points:***

Success of project is limited by inadequate funding. Project is a good escapement indicator and DFO would like to see it continue. Road run off is impacting the channel where counts occur and the road needs to be remediated. 3/5 of channel is negatively impacted by sediment which is a concern and the situation will need to be fixed. It was suggested that DFO should be conducting over flights to gather data to enable comparisons with the Nekite Chum populations. It was noted that the Larocque Decision prevents a cost-recovery approach to rehabilitate the channel. DFO policy represents a challenge for fishing Nekite Chum and terminal commercial opportunities for First Nations. ESSR policy requires commercial opportunities be exhausted first before a cost-recovery approach is allowed.

### ***Wannock Chinook Egg take- Sandie MacLaurin***

Report presented by Sandie MacLaurin. (see web page rsseps.ca for power point presentation). The 2009 Wannock Chinook Egg Take project went well. A tangle net is used to catch the fish so as to cause less damage. In 2008, 288,670 eggs were taken and 226,611 released in June of 2009. A majority were released at inlet net pen ~195,000 and the rest (~30,000) were released in the river. Both releases included a marked group. In 2009, a total of 288,903 eggs were taken and currently there are ~254,000 fry at Snootli Hatchery. Two lots of ~28k have been marked. Pacific Coastal Airlines contributed about \$15K in kind to transport the fry from Snootli Hatchery to the Wannock. DFO contributes staff, facilities, some travel and equipment costs. DFO- staff, facilities, some travel, some equipment. Historically the sports fishing association, the Rivers Inlet North coast Salmon Enhancement Association has contributed about \$16,000 to the Wannock Chinook egg take. Last year, the Good Hope Cannery Lodge owners contributed \$18,000 which is available through a contract with Pacific Salmon Foundation to RSSEPS.

### ***Johnston Creek Coho Mark Recapture***

Report presented by Sandie MacLaurin: (see web page rsseps.ca for power point presentation) The project has been financially supported by RINCSEA, DFO, RSSEPS, and the Pacific Salmon Commission's Northern Boundary Fund. First Coho eggs were taken in 2007 from Johnston Creek. In 2007, 16,784 eggs were taken (target is ~30k). Smolts from this brood were released in May of 2009. In 2008, 31,057 eggs were taken. Pre-smolts from this group were held in a netpen in Johnston Bay (transported there April 16<sup>th</sup> for 1 month final rearing, to be released this month). In 2009, 29,197 eggs taken. These have been ponded with roughly 24,705 on hand. Funding for 2010 brood has just been confirmed by PSC which will include some funding for final transport of the 2009 brood next spring to Johnston Bay. The background to the PSC Northern Boundary fund was outlined by Dave Peacock. The money available from the fund has shrunk due to the economic recession so funding for 2010 projects

has been reduced. DFO will continue to work with lodges to report marked Coho. The troll fishery is closed in the Bella Bella area so there is no data on Coho caught in the commercial fishery. Project results within SEP guidelines and enhanced fish do not appear to be impacting wild stocks although it is difficult to determine genetic impact. It is difficult to determine percentage of enhanced fish returning. This will require more research.

Andrew raised his concerns about the decline of sockeye habitat around the Smoke House Island at the foot of the lake due to siltation. Ted pointed out that the Kitit sockeye are a distinct stock and their numbers have been declining. Sandie said that sockeye have the ability to clean up their own habitat that is silted. It is not silt that is the limiting factor but the lack of sockeye returns. There was some discussion around the possibility of enhancing the Kitit sockeye.

Action: Karl Wilson agreed to examine the habitat around Smoke House Island and make recommendations.

#### Duus/Dalik Watershed Plans Jen Russell

Report presented by Jennifer Russell Of Pacificus Environmental Consulting (see web page [rsseps.ca](http://rsseps.ca) for power point presentation).

The intent of the project was to do a pilot of 2 watersheds to serve as templates for the larger task of doing watershed profiles for the whole of Rivers and Smith Watersheds. These watersheds were chosen because of logging pressures and proposals for Independent Power Production.

Each profile includes: watershed description, physiology, hydrology, uses, freshwater fish life history, distribution, population status, genetic info., habitat, productive capacity, limitations to productivity, and factors affecting fish and fish habitat.

This project provides a literature review and compilation of available data. Further data collection and analysis will be required in order to make recommendations. Jen is still open to feed back from anyone with information to add to the watershed profile. It was suggested that we still need to identify knowledge gaps and that further funding may be possible to fill in the gaps.

#### 4. **PNCIMA** Hilary Ibey, Oceans Coordinator, DFO (see [rsseps.ca](http://rsseps.ca) for PP presentation)

The PNCIMA initiative is a collaborative planning process that will develop an integrated ocean management plan for the Pacific central and north coast. The goal is to ensure sustainable human use and conserve ecological diversity of the marine area. The planning process will bring together all interested parties: commercial and recreational users, ENGOs, First Nations, government agencies, and coastal communities.

The plan will reflect a balanced approach to oceans management, with objectives for respecting economic, social, and ecological health of the region. Progress to date includes the establishment of governance structures, development of a knowledge base, and growing engagement of stakeholders Rivers Smith are in the PNCIMA area.

PNCIMA will address the balance of different uses; oil and gas exploration is not a specific focus on PNCIMA.

Aim of PNCIMA is to establish a stakeholder advisory committee to make recommendations for an integrated management plan. First Nation MUPs will link to PNCIMA, but not clear how link will be made. Final product will likely include: broad recommendations; definition of EBM; some small scale plans.

It was noted that a multi-stakeholder initiative to achieve a broad integrated fisheries management plan is ambitious and may face significant challenges. It is not intended to be a detailed management plan but an ongoing process to facilitate

#### **5. Central Coast Marine Use Plans** Aaron Heidt ([awheidt@gmail.com](mailto:awheidt@gmail.com)), Turning Point

11 First Nations are involved in this Marine Use Planning initiative. Funds are partially provided through AAROM and flowed through Turning Point. The draft Wuikinuxv Marine Use Plan (Executive Summary) was circulated. The Wuikinuxv Marine Use Plan is a strategic document to guide marine resource management in the Wuikinuxv traditional territory. The plan is comprehensive and covers jurisdiction, resource management, economic development and capacity needs across all sectors of the marine market and non-market economy. The overarching goal is to realize sustainable balance between economic development, social and cultural well-being and ecosystem health.

The plan delineates Ecological Reserves, Wuikinuxv Exclusive Use Areas, Habitat Protection Areas, Aquaculture Management Areas, Transportation Corridors, Alternative Energy Areas, and Adaptive Management Areas.

The following discussion points were raised.

Capacity and training are big obstacles to be addressed by First Nations. The Coastal Guardian Watchman is a program to ensure the presence of Wuikinuxv in their territory to monitor resource use and inform the public about Wuikinuxv protocols.

What is the link between CCMUP and PNCIMA and how will conflicts between multiple interests and plans be addressed? There is currently no dispute resolution or process for integrating multiple plans in PNCIMA.

PNCIMA will not be able to address FN MUP concerns directly so other negotiated avenues must be pursued. Integrated Fisheries Management Plans and Resource Use Protocols were referenced.

#### **6. Nature Conservancy Management Plans**

Report provided by Tim Ennis about the Nature Conservancy of Canada (BC Region) and their activities at the head of Rivers Inlet. NCC is a science-based non-advocacy based group with a broad mandate to restore and protect sensitive habitats. 3 NCC programs focus on Marine, Fresh Water and Carbon environments. NCC strategy includes Planning, Securement (obtain tenure or title) and Stewardship. NCC planning levels begin with Eco-Regional Assessment (ERA) which looks at broad areas across jurisdictional boundaries. Based on completed ERA, more detailed plans of “hotspots” called Natural Area Conservation Plans (NACPs) are conducted. These lead to much more specific Proposals for Management Plans (PMPs).

An NACP has been completed for the Central Coast and Haida Gwaii, but not the North Coast. The NCC stewardship model involves the establishment of a Baseline Inventory (which can also include a First Nation cultural inventory); Proposed Management Plans; Action & Monitoring. NCC is also interested in Capacity Building and Training. NCC has established a partnership with Wuikinuxv and has purchased estuary habitat between the head of Rivers Inlet and Oweekeno Lake. The Baseline Inventory for this area is complete and implementing the Cultural Inventory process is under discussion. NCC has also purchased a private lot in the Quay Watershed, which is shared by the Wuikinuxv and Heltsik.

The land at the head of Rivers will ultimately be transferred by NCC back to Wuikinuxv with a Conservation Covenant running in perpetuity with the Title. Wuikinuxv will be bound by the terms of the Conservation Covenant, which will be developed in collaboration with Wuikinuxv. Sandie pointed out that there is a lack of fish data in estuary. This is a possible future research project. Is the group interested in Estuary Study? Jonathan Hughes is a specialist in estuary study and may be a resource. NCC will be contacting Wuikinuxv regarding the Quay lands which are shared with the Heltsuk.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30