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December 3, 2021

To First Nations and Stakeholders,

Re: Salmon 2022/2023 Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs) for Northern and Southern British Columbia (BC)

This letter is intended to identify a number of important planning considerations that the Department plans to discuss with First Nations and stakeholders during upcoming meetings for developing the 2022/2023 Northern and Southern BC Salmon IFMPs, as well as, alert you to important dates and deadlines for this year's process. A summary of important planning considerations that will be discussed as part of planning for the 2022 season is provided in **Appendix 1**.

The Department is not seeking further feedback at this time as there will be opportunities to discuss these and other considerations for the 2022 season at planned meetings as well as during the minimum 30-day period to provide feedback and comment on proposed changes to the draft IFMPs. Further discussion with First Nations and advisory groups on these subjects will take place during the consultation process to develop the 2022/23 salmon IFMPs. Additional details on specific changes to inform discussions will be identified in the draft IFMPs that will be released at the end of February.

Salmon IFMPs are developed annually; the plans currently in place are effective June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022. The process to develop the salmon IFMPs is consistent with national guidelines for all IFMPs (see <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/peches-fisheries/ifmp-gmp/index-eng.htm>).

The current 2021/2022 Salmon IFMPs are available at:

Southern BC – <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/40980078.pdf>

Northern BC – <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/40980066.pdf>

Below is a table outlining the important dates for the development of the salmon IFMPs for the coming year.

2022-23 Salmon IFMPs Process Timelines

Activity	Proposed Timelines
Release of DFO IFMP Planning Letter and timelines for 2022/23 season	December 3, 2021
Salmon Post Season Review Meetings All First Nations and stakeholders invited to attend.	Northern – December 2-3, 2021 Southern - December 15, 2021

2022 Salmon Outlook All First Nations and stakeholders invited to attend.	December 16, 2021
Deadline for new CSAF proposals	January 27, 2022
Meetings to review and discuss potential changes to IFMPs and opportunity for focussed discussion on key IFMP issues	Fraser Forum – January 18-20 2022 Northern IHPC – February 2, 2022 Southern IHPC – February 8, 2022
Draft IFMPs released for public review & comment	February 24, 2022
Meetings to review draft IFMP	Fraser Forum – March 1-3, 2022 Northern IHPC – March 9, 2022 Southern IHPC – March 10, 2022
2022 Revised Salmon Outlook	April 5, 2022
Deadline to submit comments on draft IFMP	April 15, 2022
Final Meetings for discussion on IFMP feedback	Fraser Forum – Apr 12-14, 2022 Full IHPC – May 4-5, 2022
Target for public release of salmon IFMP	June 30, 2022

Due to on-going measures to manage COVID-19, it is anticipated that many meetings will not be in person, or, if in person meetings are considered there will also be opportunities to participate via conference call and/or webinar. Meeting invitations and details will be sent out as they become available.

Yours sincerely,

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Attachments (1):

Appendix 1: Summary of important planning considerations for the 2022 season

Summary of important planning considerations for the 2022 Season:

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General

1. Pacific Salmon Outlook - Update

For 2022, DFO Science will continue to make changes to the Outlook document in order to:

- Align CU groupings with stock management units (SMUs) to better inform decision-making consistent with Fish Stock provisions in the Fisheries Act and IFMP requirements.
- For those SMUs with statistical forecasts, consolidate and report them in the Outlook.
- For those SMUs without statistical forecasts, standardize the interpretation of SMU status in relation to outlook categories.
- Add information regarding leading indicators and previous year returns.

The goal of these changes is to produce a document that provides more useful and relevant information to inform management decisions. As a result of these changes, the final document will not be available until April 2022. A preliminary version will be circulated in December/January.

2. Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI)

The Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) aims to stem the steep decline of many Pacific salmon populations and to protect and rebuild stocks where possible by implementing a series of immediate and long-term solutions that focus on 4 key areas:

- Conservation and stewardship;
- Salmon enhancement;
- Harvest transformation, and;
- Integration and collaboration.

The working vision of the PSSI is “Working together to conserve and restore priority Pacific salmon populations for those who depend on them”.

Under the Harvest Transformation pillar, DFO is working to modernize and stabilize salmon fisheries by transforming the way that Pacific salmon is harvested. On June 29, 2021, the Minister of DFO announced extensive closures to commercial salmon fisheries in areas with significant stocks of conservation concern, beginning with the 2021 fishing season. The Minister also announced the Pacific Salmon Commercial Transition Program, which will provide salmon harvesters with the option to retire their licences for fair market value and will facilitate the transition to a smaller commercial harvesting sector.

The Department is beginning a comprehensive engagement process to discuss longer-term conservation measures and the Pacific Salmon Commercial Transition Program: more information will follow under separate letter.

These conservation-driven management decisions provide strong protections for the most fragile stocks of concern across the Pacific region and form an important part of the harvest transformation pillar, one of the four key areas noted above. Conservation closures are important to help protect salmon stocks of concern, but these measures are only part of PSSI’s holistic and transformative approach to salmon management introduced in the four pillars and five horizontal themes. Early implementation engagement on the PSSI as a whole is anticipated to start in December and will be organized in alignment with the

conservation closures and mitigation measures engagements and consultations. This broader engagement on the PSSI will provide further details on the themes and intended results under each of the PSSI's four pillars, and will also include discussing how regional governance regarding conservation and restoration may be improved.

Further details can be found here: [Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](https://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pacific-salmon-strategy-initiative)

3. Big Bar Landslide - Update

A series of rock fall events at the slide site in late February and early March 2021 resulted in a construction pause and project review. It was determined that the construction of the permanent fishway could no longer meet the set completion date of May 2022. This resulted in a decision to reassess the entire project strategy using a Structured Decision Making (SDM) process. The SDM process will be used to redefine the passage problem, determine project and management objectives, research alternative management actions and their consequences and trade-offs, and arrive at a solution that satisfies the project objectives. The SDM process will draw from existing studies, meetings, analyses, and incorporate new data and other information generated to date, collect additional information as required, and incorporate the expert views, opinions and advice from First Nations, stakeholders and subject matter experts to allow for a collaborative decision-making process from a wide array of backgrounds.

The preliminary results of the monitoring program for the 2021 migration season indicate that migrating salmon were able to utilize the nature-like fishway under moderate and low flow conditions experienced this year and migrate through the slide area with minimal delay. The positive passage conditions were a result of incremental improvements to passage made in the spring of 2021, a delay in arrival of fish, as well as a moderate snowpack and early freshet. Despite this, the biological risk to future early-timed stocks of migrating salmon remains high as passage is still not fully assured on years of moderate to high flow conditions during freshet.

Working with technical experts from DFO and First Nations partners, planning for the 2022 salmon migration continues, including continuing monitoring, conservation enhancement and assisted transport systems. Lessons learned from the last three years of operations will be used to inform adjustments to the programs.

DFO is also working with First Nations and others on gathering information to support an assessment of impacts to salmon, ecosystems, as well as, programs and infrastructure associated with the extreme rain event and widespread flooding that occurred in southern BC in November. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

First Nations Food, Social and Ceremonial Fishery Opportunities

Conservation of salmon populations is the primary objective in managing the resource. After conservation requirements are met, the Department is committed to respecting Constitutional and Treaty obligations to provide priority access for First Nations Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) harvest opportunities. It is anticipated that conservation measures or low returns for many salmon populations, particularly those returning to the Fraser River and Skeena River, may constrain First Nations FSC harvest opportunities while stocks of conservation concern migrate through fishing areas.

For 2022, pre-season fishing plans will need to consider how to manage FSC harvest opportunities for abundant populations (e.g. Fraser River Late run Sockeye or Summer 4-1 Chinook) while addressing ongoing conservation concerns and constraints for co-migrating stocks. Departmental staff will consult with First Nations on fishing plans that achieve conservation objectives and FSC fishery opportunities to provide for harvest of small numbers of fish for ceremonial purposes (particularly when stocks of concern may be impacted), as well as more abundant stocks and/or surpluses that are identified. Input will be sought on FSC sharing arrangements for circumstances in which Fraser River sockeye returns are not adequate to provide for full First Nations FSC access. Additional restrictions in commercial and recreational fisheries will likely be required to provide for First Nations harvest opportunities. Pre-season and in-season plans to address these concerns will be discussed with First Nations and stakeholders as part of the IFMP development process.

For Fraser River salmon, the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement was signed on July 5, 2019 by the Minister and the President of the Fraser Salmon Management Council. The Fraser Salmon Management Council is a mandated body with First Nations membership from throughout the Fraser watershed and approach waters. The agreement sets out a Tier 2 governance framework that will support engagement, decision making and recommendations relating to management of Fraser salmon. The Department is working collaboratively via the Fraser Salmon Management Board (FSMB) and its Joint Technical Committee (JTC) to advance key FSMB work plan items and support planning for the 2022 season. The work of the FSMB is guided by its annual work plan which sets shared priorities for the year ahead, including issues identified in this letter (e.g. management approaches for Fraser River salmon). Consistent with the FSMCA, the FSMB will work to reach consensus and make joint recommendations on items within their Annual Work Plan.

4. COSEWIC Assessments and Species at Risk Act Listing Decisions

Over 60 salmon and two anadromous trout designatable units (DUs) have been recently, or will soon be, assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). For those DUs assessed as endangered, threatened, special concern or extirpated, COSEWIC's submission of its assessments to the Government of Canada, via its annual report, initiates a process to determine whether or not to list the DU under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The Governor in Council (Cabinet) may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, decide to add the species to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk; decide not to add the species to the List; or refer the matter back to COSEWIC.

To inform the listing decision, DFO prepares the following regional information: a Recovery Potential Assessment (science advice); management scenarios; Indigenous Cultural Significance information; a Cost-Benefit Analysis; and consultations with First Nations, Wildlife Management Boards, Stakeholders, ENGOs, Provinces and Territories, and the general public. Management scenarios outline measures that would potentially be taken under a "Do Not List" or a "List" outcome, with the latter focusing on how SARA prohibitions may impact fisheries and other activities. Consultations are undertaken prior to submitting a regional recommendation and will inform a regulatory impact analysis statement required as part of a decision by the Governor in Council. Development of regional information to inform the listing decision is currently underway for the 41 DUs which have been assessed as endangered, threatened or special concern by COSEWIC to date.

Additional details can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry.html>.

Species	# of DUs*	COSEWIC Assessment Date	COSEWIC Status	COSEWIC Annual Report Date
Sakinaw Sockeye	1	2016 (April)	EN	Oct 2016
Interior Fraser Coho	1	2016 (November)	TH	Oct 2017
Okanagan Chinook	1	2017 (April)	EN	Oct 2017
Fraser Sockeye (Group I)	24	2017 (November)	8 EN, 2 TH, 5 SC, 9 NAR	Oct 2018
Southern BC Chinook (Group I)	16	2018 (November)	8 EN, 4 TH, 1 SC, 1 NAR, 2 DD	Oct 2019
Southern BC Chinook (Group II)	12	2020 (November)	4 EN, 3 TH, 1 SC, 1 NAR, 3 DD	Oct 2021
Steelhead Trout (Thompson & Chilcotin) Regular re-assessment**	2	2020 (November)	2 EN	Oct 2021
Fraser Sockeye (Group II)	7	2021 (November)	TBD	Anticipated Oct 2022

EN – Endangered

TH – Threatened

SC – Special Concern

NAR – Not at Risk

DD – Data Deficient

*DU refers to “designatable unit” or population. DUs and Wild Salmon Policy Conservation Units are similar, and in most cases, the same

**underwent an Emergency Assessment in 2018, as per SARA S.28 (1).

Further information on the SARA listing process can be found at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-act-accord-funding/listing-process/act.html>

5. Commercial Salmon Allocation Framework (CSAF) Demonstration Fisheries

The Department is continuing to implement existing and review new CSAF demonstration fisheries proposals through the IFMP process. CSAF demonstration fishery proposals are intended to provide increased flexibility for harvesters to fish their commercial salmon shares. CSAF demonstration fishery proposals are assessed through an Evaluation Framework which outlines Departmental objectives and were developed with support from the SCC and CSAB.

The Department is requesting confirmation of continued interest in existing and submission of any new demonstration fishery proposals be submitted by proponents to DFO.PacificSalmonRMT-EGRSaumondupacifique.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca and their local Fisheries Manager **no later than January 27th, 2022**. As in previous years, this is to ensure sufficient time for the Department to evaluate the

proposals and provide an opportunity for feedback and discussion through the draft IFMP consultation process. Demonstration fishery proposals that are not submitted by this deadline will not be considered for the 2022 season.

Southern BC

6. Chinook

In recent years, DFO has implemented fisheries management measures to support the recovery of at-risk Fraser River and Southern BC Chinook populations (see details here: <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/salmon-saumon/fraser-chin-mgmt-gest-quin-eng.html>). These measures were developed following consultation with First Nations communities, recreational and commercial harvesters and environmental organizations. These measures include highly precautionary fishery restrictions intended to provide a high degree of protection to at-risk Fraser Spring 4₂, Spring 5₂ and Summer 5₂ Chinook returning in 2021. The management objective was to allow as many fish to pass through to the spawning grounds as possible, which was expected to reduce overall Canadian fishery mortalities on these populations to very low levels. Post-season results for the 2019 and 2020 seasons have been compiled and these will be reviewed at the December Post-Season Review meetings. An assessment of fishery mortalities for the 2021 season will require additional time to process from coded-wire tags, stock composition information, and an evaluation of impacts of the Big Bar rockslide; information to support this assessment is expected to be available beginning in late March/April 2022.

For upcoming years, ongoing precautionary fishery management actions to support conservation and promote rebuilding of these stocks will be needed. Additional discussions will also be required on management measures that may be needed to address other Chinook stocks of conservation concern and Pacific Salmon Treaty obligations for specified Chinook stocks. This will require continued restrictions and/or closures to fisheries in times and areas where these stocks are encountered in Northern and Southern BC including First Nations, recreational and commercial fisheries in marine areas and the Fraser River.

Consistent with the Harvest Transformation Pillar of the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative, DFO will work together with harvesters to modernize how salmon fisheries are managed, and work to provide sustainable harvesting opportunities through marked selective fisheries (MSF). To help determine where and when the implementation of MSF and/or mass marking (MM) is most appropriate, the Department is working on a discussion paper to support further decision making around MM and MSF for discussion in early 2022. There has been considerable interest and concern raised about the use of these management tools and the discussion paper is intended to identify the key issues that need to be considered. It is anticipated that the paper will identify the key issues, benefits, costs and risks, as well as identify any additional analysis required to support decision making on the use of MM/MSF. The discussion paper will serve as a guide to complete additional analysis of issues identified, consider opportunities to address issues, and support development of operational framework(s) to guide decision making on MM/MSF. DFO plans to seek input from First Nations and stakeholders on this work and further information will be provided on engagement opportunities at a later date.

7. Southern Resident Killer Whales

The Government of Canada, together with Indigenous groups, partners and stakeholders, continues to take important steps to protect and recover the Southern Resident Killer Whales (listed as Endangered under the *Species at Risk Act*). Given the status of the population and ongoing threats to Southern Resident Killer Whale recovery, Canada has implemented a number of enhanced measures starting in 2018, aimed at increasing prey availability and accessibility for Southern Resident Killer Whales, particularly with respect to Chinook salmon, and reducing threats related to physical and acoustic disturbance in key foraging areas.

For 2022, the Government of Canada will be reviewing the suite of management measures implemented and will be discussing potential adjustments to measures with Indigenous groups, the Southern Resident Killer Whale Indigenous and Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group, Technical Working Groups, and with key stakeholders. Canada intends to ensure that any updates to actions for the 2022 season can be implemented by spring 2022 to coincide with the return of Southern Resident Killer Whales in typically greater numbers to the Salish Sea.

8. Chum Management

Inside Southern Chum (ISC)

Preliminary returns to many Inside Southern Chum (ISC) systems were extremely poor in 2021. Test fishing catches in Johnstone Strait indicated the Chum Salmon return was below the 1.0 million critical threshold identified in Chapter 6 of the Pacific Salmon Treaty and in the 2021-22 Southern Salmon IFMP. Based on the Albion test fishery catch information, the terminal Fraser Chum Salmon return was estimated to be below 500 thousand. Returns of Chum Salmon to many Strait of Georgia systems were also extremely poor, with most well below escapement targets. As a result of the poor returns of ISC, there were limited FSC harvest opportunities provided to Fraser River First Nations, recreational fisheries were closed to the retention of Chum Salmon and there were no commercial Chum Salmon fisheries. For 2022 pre-season planning, the Department plans to review the ISC and Fraser River Chum decision guidelines to address harvest concerns and issues identified during the 2021 season.

Interior Fraser River Steelhead- Fisheries Management Measures

In January 2018, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed the Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead Designatable Units (DUs) as *Endangered*, triggering a SARA emergency listing process. This listing process concluded on July 11, 2019, when the Minister of Fisheries announced Cabinet's decision not to list Thompson or Chilcotin River Steelhead under SARA, opting to support recovery of these stocks through existing regulatory mechanisms under the *Fisheries Act*. In November 2020, COSEWIC reassessed both the Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead DU's as *Endangered* as part of its regular assessment schedule. In October 2021, this assessment was formally published in the COSEWIC Annual Report initiating a non-emergency listing process under SARA. Key threats to Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead according to the COSEWIC status assessment include changes to the marine environment, fishing mortality, degradation of freshwater and marine habitats, predation and competition.

Addressing declines in spawner abundance of Interior Fraser River (IFR) Steelhead (the management group that includes Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead) requires a precautionary approach to reduce incidental fishery mortalities and allow as many of these fish as possible to reach spawning areas. For

many years, a window closure approach has been used within the Fraser River to reduce bycatch of Steelhead during commercial fisheries targeting salmon. The window closure approach was expanded significantly starting in 2018 to all fishing sectors, and to all areas within the migration corridor of Interior Fraser River Steelhead in marine waters and into the Fraser River and tributaries. In addition to the window closure, commercial chum salmon fishery closures were implemented in 2021 under the recently announced PSSI Harvest Transformation initiative.

Expectations for IFR Steelhead in 2022 are for continued extremely poor returns, requiring ongoing measures to reduce impacts in salmon fisheries to maximize the number of potential IFR Steelhead spawners. At this time, we anticipate that measures applied to the Chum fishery in 2022 to protect IFR steelhead will closely follow those implemented in recent years. There were commercial Chum fishery closures announced in 2021 as part of the recent PSSI harvest transformation pillar and further engagement with First Nations and stakeholders will occur over the coming months to determine longer-term PSSI closures. Consultations will occur on all fisheries management measures taken to protect IFR Steelhead in the coming year as part of the Department's preseason planning and associated management measures for management of chum salmon.

In addition to the measures taken to reduce incidental fisheries mortalities of IFR Steelhead in salmon fisheries, DFO continues to work with the Province of BC to address other threats to IFR Steelhead. As part of this process, DFO will be working to ensure that all our programs, including hatchery and habitat management, are aligned to support IFR Steelhead recovery.

9. Fraser River Sockeye

A quantitative forecast for Fraser Sockeye returns is expected in early 2022. Fraser Sockeye returns have been well below the median forecast in most recent years however in 2021 all run timing groups returned at p50 or higher partially due to the use of much more conservative models to generate the 2021 forecast. The 2021 return was still well below the cycle average. Planning for 2022 will need to consider the potential for a range of returns, as well as specific management measures for protecting and rebuilding weak stocks.

Key Fraser Sockeye considerations during consultations will include the duration of the window closure to protect weak stocks returning at the start of the season, the escapement plan for Early Stuart, Early Summer, Summer and Late run aggregates and additional management measures for stocks of concern. Consistent with the approach in recent years, the Department plans to identify two escapement plan options in the draft IFMP for consideration in 2022. Options are usually informed by the Sockeye escapement plan implemented in the brood year (2018) and modifications to account for annual considerations including forecast returns. Further discussion will be required on the potential for additional terminal harvest opportunities for Fraser Sockeye stocks that may return in abundance. Key considerations will include taking into account the uncertainty of in-season information, but also bycatch concerns of co-migrating stocks and species. In addition, discussions regarding the Fraser test fishery program will be included in pre-season planning discussions.

10. Southern BC Coho

As outlined in Chapter 5 of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST), allowable exploitation rates (ERs) for Canada and the U.S. are identified based on the status of Coho management units (MUs). Canada is responsible for determining the status level for Canadian MUs and setting the corresponding ER caps for both parties.

Canada's management approach is driven by the status of Interior Fraser River (IFR) Coho MU, based on an integration of marine survival rates (with break points at 3% and 6%) and spawner abundance. Under this approach, ER caps are set at 20%, 30% and 45% for *Low*, *Moderate* and *Abundant* status, respectively. Canada is required to confirm the status of Interior Fraser River Coho MU in March of each year.

Southern BC Coho have been in a low productivity regime for many years. Based on smolt to adult survival rates in the last two years, we anticipate that Interior Fraser River Coho will remain in *Low* status in 2022. Under *Low* status, Canada has planned and managed domestic fisheries with a precautionary approach to reduce its share of the total exploitation rate on IFR Coho to approximately 3% to 5% or less. Domestic management measures will be discussed through the annual process to develop the Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs) and will need to account for potential impacts from increased Fraser River sockeye fisheries associated with the 2022 dominant return year.

Status determination and corresponding ER caps are not completed for the Strait of Georgia and Lower Fraser MUs at this time, due to insufficient data. However, new stock assessment projects are being developed to provide additional information for these MUs, which can be used to determine status in the future. A pilot program that was initiated in 2020 and again in 2021, will continue in 2022 to establish the feasibility of implementing a mark-recapture program to estimate Lower Fraser Coho escapement. A new mark recapture program was initiated on the Cowichan River in 2018 in order to both estimate escapement and smolt to adult return (SAR) rates. At Sakinaw Lake, the operation of the Sockeye counting fence has been extended to capture Coho migration and paired with a PIT tagging program to estimate SAR. Several more systems in the Strait of Georgia – Vancouver Island (SGVI) and Strait of Georgia – Mainland (SGML) MUs are under investigation for developing PIT tag based SAR indicators for both hatchery and wild systems including Black Creek. A program using genetic markers to assess aggregate wild Coho returns to areas on the East Coast of Vancouver Island (ECVI) was implemented starting September 16, 2021. Fishery sampling was conducted in First Nation and recreational fisheries; samples were genetically analyzed to determine origin. This pilot program is proposed to continue in September 2022, in parts of the Strait of Georgia. Consultations on these programs, including the impacts of these assessments on stocks of conservation concern, will occur as part of the preseason planning process.

Northern BC

11. Northern BC Coho

After experiencing near-record low returns of Coho on the North Coast in 2018, the Department implemented additional measures to reduce the overall exploitation rate of commercial fisheries starting in 2019. Additional reductions were implemented in 2020 and 2021, with a goal of a 50% overall reduction in commercial exploitation in Northern Fisheries. While both commercial and recreational catch was reduced in 2021, and some Coho stocks showed modest improvement, preliminary escapement data suggest that many Northern Coho populations remain broadly weak. Ocean survival continues to be a concern for Coho returning in 2022; and subsequently, a continued precautionary approach to Coho fishery management is warranted for the coming year. The Department plans to consult with First Nations and stakeholders through the IFMP development process to discuss specific Northern Coho management actions.

12. Northern BC Chinook

There has been a trend of below average returns of North Coast Chinook in recent years. In 2021, in response to a continued trend in poor productivity of Skeena Chinook, the Department implemented a suite of management measures to reduce the overall exploitation rates on Skeena Chinook. For 2021, restrictions also included an extended closure of the commercial troll fishery in Northern BC until August 12 to pass through Fraser Summer 41 Chinook to support Fraser First Nations FSC harvests. 2021 was also a unique year due to COVID-19 and restrictions on travel which reduced recreational fishing effort in the North Coast and Haida Gwaii. Considering the reduction in both commercial and recreational exploitation, Chinook escapements to the Skeena River still fell short of expectations. For 2022, preliminary Chinook data suggests that we remain in a period of low Chinook productivity and continued precautionary management measures will likely be required. The Department intends to engage First Nations and stakeholders both bilaterally and as part of the 2022 IFMP planning process to develop fishing plans that will be informed by the management actions implemented in recent seasons. Similar measures may be necessary for Nass Chinook.

13. Skeena and Nass Sockeye Escapement Goal Development

In 2022, the Department plans to start an engagement process that addresses Canada's obligation under the renewed PST provisions (2018) to establish aggregate escapement goals for Nass and Skeena river sockeye based on scientifically peer-reviewed analyses prior to the 2023 fishing season. Specifically, the purpose is to review and seek feedback on alternative approaches for identifying aggregate escapement goals for sockeye salmon returning to the Nass and Skeena rivers as required for implementing Annex IV, Chapter 2 of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST). Alternative methods for setting escapement goals will be developed by a technical working group and scientifically peer reviewed through the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) in April 2022. This engagement process will include Canadian First Nations and stakeholders in reviewing potential escapement goal options while considering possible ecological, social, economic and cultural benefits and costs. The input gathered through this process will help inform the Government of Canada on the perspectives of First Nations and stakeholders with respect to desired outcomes and risk tolerance, and thus inform the final approach for establishing PST escapement goals for the bilateral management of Nass and Skeena sockeye populations. This work is not planned for completion or implementation in the 2022 fishing season. Further information on the engagement process will be provided at a later date.