

FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA **COMMUNIQUE**

June 2022



STRONGER TOGETHER

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STRONGER TOGETHER



ABOUT FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL OF BC

Fisheries and aquatic resources are foundational to First Nations' communities, culture, well-being, identity, and way of life. We work to protect aquatic resources and habitat and help First Nations build a strong, coherent voice on Pacific fisheries and aquatic resources by:



Facilitating strong province-wide collaboration



Building and maintaining First Nations capacity



Amplifying the voices of rights holders

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EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT UNIT

Message from the Executive Director

ʔi ʔə ce:p ʔəw ʔəy ʔaí, Si:yém nə Siyeýe?

Are you all well, my esteemed friends (relations),

The First Nations Fisheries Council continues to work on significant files that are high level and broad matters of concern to all BC First Nations. The main priority areas of focus will fall under, and be grouped under three main headings identified in our Strategic Plan:

1. Protecting and restoring Pacific salmon
2. Safeguarding habitat and responding to threats
3. Building solid economic opportunities for First Nations

We continue to push forward on approximately 97 activity lines under the broad headings above, some significant activities that have occurred since our last update.

- The FNFC has launched the Salmon Action Dialogue series in partnership with the Pacific Salmon Foundation with the notion that a strategy to protect and recover Pacific salmon will need to include ALL of us! (First Nations Government/Leadership, both levels of government, and all other interest groups). The dialogue series will be the space to identify needed actions and to explore the required processes for collaboration. Interestingly, we heard from Washington state and Tribal leader David Troutt from Nisqually about “the Washington Way” and listing Pacific salmon as an endangered species. This became a forcing mechanism to establish the legislative imperative to provide response mechanisms.
- We will be convening a workshop with the First Nations Leadership Council to map out a politically focused, strategic path forward to increase our presence in Ottawa and Victoria to more effectively influence decisions that better reflect First Nations fishing rights, and priority access.
- By extension, Salmon require water and habitat for survival. The FNFC has made significant progress in envisioning a provincial Water Table in collaboration with the Province of BC. Best practises and expertise in different regions of the province need to come together and develop best practises and collaboration where

improvement is needed. A First Nation Caucus will support this direction and identify how BC First Nations can be situated in a meaningful role in meeting the DRIPA and UNDRIP intentions, and meet reconciliation objectives.

- As a responsible plan to transition open net-pens was mandated by the federal government, the FNFC's Aquaculture coordinating committee is hosting regional workshops to hear from BC Nations, and develop and inform the Transition Plan. This same initiative may also assist in supporting a new national Aquaculture Act.

Further detail can be reviewed by the sector reports in the following pages.

Thanks, and take care!

hay čxw qə,



Jordan Point

Executive Director

First Nations Fisheries Council of BC



Presenting the FNFC's Strategic Plan

"Indigenous Policy Coordination – Stronger Together"

FNFC has now published and is currently implementing our fourth strategic plan (year 2021-2024), titled "Indigenous Policy Coordination - Stronger Together".

We remain committed to building First Nations collective capacity to generate systemic and transformative change within fisheries in BC. To move in this direction, we must strategically navigate the complex environment of Legislation, Regulation, and Policy, while also understanding Reconciliation Framework Agreements, Treaties, Self-Governance, and Indigenous Rights. We aim to build solid structures that bring together strength of First Nations invested in creating legislative and regulatory change.

Specifically, FNFC will focus on increasing our influence at the federal level while concurrently building First Nations' strength and capacity to work collaboratively with each other, and in partnership with government to update and implement laws, legislation and policy to be consistent with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and reconciliation.

The FNFC's three strategic priorities for 2021-2024 outlined below:

- **Recovering wild Pacific Salmon.** Wild Pacific salmon in BC has declined by 93% over the last thirty years. To transform how salmon is currently managed in BC, FNFC will convene First Nations to support them in collectively working across governments and territories to address threats specific to each stage of the salmon life cycle.
- **Safeguarding habitat and responding to threats.** The deteriorating health of marine and freshwater ecosystems undermines First Nations' livelihoods, health outcomes and community food security. To stop the major declines, FNFC will work with First Nations and all levels of government to take joint action to safeguard aquatic habitats and resources against growing cumulative impacts.
- **Creating economic opportunity.** FNFC supports First Nations in their interest to achieve greater economic returns from their respective fisheries. We understand that the scope of First Nations fisheries, and the disposition of fish, includes, but is not limited to fisheries for food, social, and ceremonial purposes. Many First Nation fishers and even entire communities, are heavily involved in and reliant on the capture fishery portion of the commercial sector.

FNFC reviews and updates its strategic plans to build from the successes of previous strategic plans and lessons learned through challenges and unanticipated outcomes. **Please visit our website and download a copy of the Strategic Plan to learn more about the specific goals under each priority.**



CORPORATE SERVICES UNIT

The First Nations Fisheries Charity Fund Society (FNFCFS)

Expansion

The First Nations Fisheries Charity Fund Society (FNFCFS) was created by the First Nations Fisheries Society (FNFS) as a strategic initiative that supports Theme 3 of the FNFC Action Plan, Safeguarding Habitat and Responding to Threats.

In May 2019, the FNFCFS received charitable status with a focus on environmental protection reflected in the FNFC's 2021-2024 Strategic Plan under Priority 2, Safeguarding Habitat and Responding to Threats. Fundraising from the Corporate sector helps with desperately needed resources for environmental initiatives when government funding is not available.

In late 2021, the office underwent a substantial reconstruction in order to support the development of the Charity Fund and various FNFC initiatives. This exciting new office space became functional in May 2022 and is currently utilized for internal staff and selected external groups. Additional technology upgrades to this space are coming soon!

New Hires in the Past Three Months

The FNFC has welcomed new additions to its team in the past three months! In particular, the Partnerships & Intergovernmental Relations and Habitat & Environmental Protection Sectors have been steadily expanding to execute their key activities more efficiently.

Although we continue to work in a hybrid environment, FNFC held its first official in-person staff meeting of the year on April 5, 2022. It was nice to finally come together and hold fruitful discussions on strategic objectives for the new fiscal year.

NEW HIRES

CSU Sector:

Debora Pereira, Coordinator

PIR Sector:

Montse Oliver, Manager

Rebeka MacDonald, Coordinator

HEP Sector: Hire + Promotions

Jacquelyne Fitchell, Sr. Manager (Promotion)

Valerie Zimmermann, Coordinator
(First Nations Fisheries Legacy Fund)

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



POLICY & FISH MANAGEMENT UNIT

Toward shared First Nations aquaculture development

Aquaculture continues to be an important topic for First Nations in BC.

In April 2022, the Court released a judgement in the judicial review proceedings stating that the Minister's decision to decline license renewals for Discovery Islands salmon farms was unreasonable and insufficient in rationale. As a result, the Court set aside the decision, meaning it no longer has any force or effect. The Court's decision may fail to address Canada's obligation to Indigenous peoples whose rights stand to be impacted by it. However, as intervenors, we have limited options to influence the Court's decision. The Minister now has the option to appeal, or to make the decision again with fuller reasoning.

We echo the importance of respecting First Nations right to self-determination, and highlight that transition may be different for First Nations in different areas, which was the focus and intent of the original intervention by the Leadership Council and the FNFC.

In connection to this, we support First Nations collaboration, and aim to bring a strong coherent voice to influence Open Net-Pen Transition Plan development through a First Nations Coalition Working Group. The opinions and interests of First Nations in aquaculture are diverse, including some First Nations that operate and/or are in partnership with industry. Aquaculture itself is also varied, and include multiple species (finfish, shellfish, kelp, etc.) and technologies.

FNFC facilitated First Nations meetings with opportunities to provide input on what this Transition Plan may look like and to discuss what transition means. Broadly, participants expressed that transition must protect and accommodate First Nations interests and investments. Many stressed the importance of Indigenous engagement (Tier 1 and Tier 2), particularly where facilities are located in First Nations territories and decisions may impact the communities. These findings underline the need to work together to develop a shared aquaculture strategy that supports First Nations objectives for food security and economic benefits, and we are working with FNFC's Aquaculture Coordinating Committee and First Nations support the development of such shared strategy.

We continue to emphasize to Federal and Provincial Governments the need to resource and engage with First Nations, support First Nations to First Nations dialogues, and avoid making unilateral decisions that may impact First Nations rights.

Opening up to community partnership meetings

As COVID-related restrictions begin to ease and First Nations communities begin to welcome guests, the FNFC team is also starting to travel and meet with communities and partners. It

has been over two years of working virtually, and re-connecting in-person is an important step to strengthen First Nations partnerships and work together to advance First Nations fisheries interests. FNFC continues to connect with FN partners, including through the Partnership Accord that networks FN fisheries organizations across BC.

Recent Meetings: In May, FNFC had the opportunity to travel to Terrace to meet with delegates from First Nations in the Skeena watershed through the Skeena First Nations Technical Committee (SFNTC). At this meeting, FNFC heard from participants on their vision for SFNTC progress, and broad support to continue collaborating and support united voices for Skeena salmon. We saw interest in taking stronger roles in Skeena salmon-related science programs, and more effectively influencing fisheries management plans and measures that intercept Skeena salmon.

Since 2016, FNFC has supported the SFNTC to convene and work together on Skeena salmon. This process has made positive progress, taking steps to facilitate effective Tier 1 (First Nations-First Nations) structures at the technical level for Skeena salmon. FNFC looks forward to continue working with the SFNTC, and upholding functional First Nations collaborative processes which can support First Nations in developing coordinated and coherent recommendations from the Skeena region on matters of common interests.

In the coming weeks, we plan to attend forums hosted by Council of Ha'wiih and the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance. We are excited to meet with First Nations and partners again and plan to meet with more First Nations partners as opportunities arise.

For more information, please contact Janson Wong, Senior Manager, Policy and Fisheries Management.

E-mail: janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca



Photo credit: Michelle Walsh



Photo credit: Rachel Elliott

PARTNERSHIPS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS UNIT

Salmon Action Dialogues Session Highlights the Washington Model

First Nations Fisheries Council of BC and Pacific Salmon Foundation have partnered to present the Pacific Salmon Action Dialogue Series, with the goal to align and coordinate action for the conservation and recovery of wild Pacific Salmon. The Dialogues focus on collaborative discussions that are not yet taking place in other forums and consider how to prioritize all salmon discussions and actions together.

Session 1 (March 3, 2022) set the stage as our virtual launch event, where we examined what the present salmon system looks like. Session 2 (April 27, 2022), also virtual, then explored functioning examples of multi-jurisdictional collaborative models. Three panels convened to provide insight into the structure and characteristics of the models, how the models have served to advance collective outcomes, and what lessons have been learned that BC can in turn learn from.

What can BC learn from Washington's model?

Of particular interest was the Washington Model, presented by Erik Neatherlin, Executive Director of the Washington State Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, and David Troutt, Natural Resources Director and Nisqually Indian Tribe Chair for the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council. At its core, the Washington model, or 'the Washington Way', is based on a watershed approach, supported by state legislature and federal congressional delegation. The watershed approach means that decisions, especially those having to do with habitat restoration or protection, are either made at the watershed scale or thoroughly vetted and supported at the watershed scale.

The policy and legal framework for the Washington Model approach is rooted in the Federal Endangered Species Act. The federal listing shifted work from 'salmon management' to 'salmon recovery'. To allow the state some local control over how the federal government implemented the Endangered Species Act, a state response was put in place: the Salmon Recovery Act and the statewide salmon recovery strategy called 'Extinction is Not an Option'.

A key provision of the Salmon Recovery Act was a forcing mechanism, in the form of state statute that automated activities and secured funding and policies to implement the recovery priorities. The importance of this piece was restated in the discussion period, begging the question: what is BC's forcing mechanism?

This question will be considered as we move into Session 3 (June 1, 2022) and Session 4 (June 2, 2022), a two-day event combining in-person and virtual participation. These sessions will compare local collaborative models in BC, on the coast and in the interior, to identify key elements for BC to develop a collaborative framework for salmon



Marine and Coastal Management Program Updates

FNFC's Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) program is focused on relationship building between First Nations and government partners, as well as capacity enhancement for First Nations to participate in marine management and stewardship. The current projects being engaged on by FNFC's MCM program are:

1. Cumulative Effects of Marine Shipping (CEMS) in collaboration with Transport Canada (TC),
2. Southern BC Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in collaboration with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Province of BC,
3. Development of a Coastal Marine Strategy (CMS) with the Province of BC.

The Ocean Protection Plan CEMS pilot project for the south coast of BC

focuses on producing a regional cumulative effects assessment for marine shipping impacts on valued components identified by FNFC's Ship Movement and Vessel Management Coordinating Committee (VMCC). This initiative is in the important pre-assessment phase, where technical staff from interested Nations are participating in a technical working group with Transport Canada and FNFC to produce in-depth technical outputs, which will inform the assessment. This work will take place in May and June and will be communicated back to the VMCC at a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting on June 23, 2022.

DFO's Southern BC MSP program is working on the development of a marine spatial planning framework

with guidance from FNFC's Marine Research and Science Coordinating Committee (MRSCC). This framework will guide the marine planning process on the south coast of BC after 2023. One of the key components of this framework is a set of interests and considerations papers, outlining important aspects of marine governance as identified by parties involved in the marine planning. The MRSCC is authoring one of these papers during development workshops in May and June.

The Province of BC is co-developing a Coastal Marine Strategy with coastal First Nations in BC. FNFC has provided strategic direction and has supported engagement sessions with south coast First Nations. These sessions began in the winter with First Nations Leadership meeting with Minister Nathan Cullen to lay the groundwork for working together and the current state of the coastal environment. A 'What We Heard' document was circulated following these sessions, and FNFC put forward recommendations on how to move forward together in the co-development process. This spring, FNFC hosted full-day technical sessions to help build out an Intentions Paper which is being co-written with First Nations and will inform the Strategy's development. This paper and broader engagement with the public will be finalized in June of 2022.

For more information, please contact Astrid Niemann-Zajac, Senior Manager for Partnerships & Intergovernmental Relations

E-mail: Astrid@fnfisheriescouncil.ca





HABITAT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT

First Nations Water Caucus

June 2022 Launch of the First Nations Water Caucus and BC Water Table

Over the past year the FNFC has supported the establishment of a First Nation Water Caucus (FNWC). The FNWC is the Tier 1 structure that supports discussion, planning and identification of shared interests and priorities among First Nations. FNWC delegates will work with representatives of the BC provincial government ministries with responsibility for fresh water at the new BC Water Table. The FNWC is intended to be an enduring structure and a means to strengthen First Nations voices on matters related to fresh water, fish and aquatic ecosystems.

The FNWC was developed with support from a First Nations advisory group and brings together between 5-15 First Nations delegates from major watersheds across BC. A call for delegates was circulated in May and delegates will be selected the first week of June. The FNWC launch meeting will take place June 27, 2022 in Vancouver, BC.

The BC Water Table was developed, and a proposed Terms of Reference was created, with an interim working group including four First Nations participants and four representatives from the province. The Water Table is a tier 2 technical collaborative forum on water between First Nations and the Province of BC to work together on shared aquatic resource priorities that have province-wide implications. The scope of the Water Table includes addressing legislation, policy, programs and management related to fresh water, fish, aquatic ecosystems. As well as connected social, economic, environmental, governance matters and implementation of reconciliation objectives.

The first activity will be to co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy and associated action plans. The Water Table launch meeting will take place June 28, 2022 in Vancouver BC.

If you would like to receive updates regarding the FNWC and the BC Water Table, please contact Valarie Zimmermann, Coordinator, Habitat and Environmental Protection

E-mail: valerie@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.

UAV Habitat Mapping for Wild Salmon Stewardship

FNFLF (First Nations Fisheires Legacy Fund Society), with support from FNFC, is integrating community mapping with geospatial technologies to enhance capacity for monitoring and managing wild salmon habitat.

Last year, the First Nations Fisheries Legacy Fund received multi-year funding from the BC Salmon Restoration Fund to implement the UAV Habitat Mapping to Inform Wild Salmon Stewardship project. This project is led through a tripartite partnership between the FNFLF, the Okanagan Nation Alliance and Skeena Fisheries Commission. Another key partner on the project is the University of Victoria Map Shop who are providing capacity building support on the project through training, donation of equipment, and research and methodology development expertise.

This project addresses the need that First Nations across BC have identified for gathering data regarding the state of the natural environment within their traditional territories, particularly those aspects related to wild salmon habitat. Wild salmon are a critical resource to First Nations and are increasingly threatened by climate change, urban development, and natural resource extraction. When coupled with local community knowledge on salmon population dynamics and habitat quality, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and other geospatial tools present an opportunity for First Nations to coordinate and share in the development of new forms of data collection methods and practices that support the conservation of Pacific wild salmon habitat.

Some outcomes of the project include:

1. Multi-use high resolution datasets that can be used beyond the lifetime of this project.
2. Establishment of standardized methodologies and protocols for community-based watershed mapping and monitoring that incorporates Indigenous knowledge.
3. The development of a Salmon Habitat Assessment Framework Document that supports BC First Nations in the implementation of environmental stream flows and community planning for salmon stewardship.

In the first year of the project, partners developed strong working relationships, built technological and equipment capacity, and begun training personnel. Project activities begun in a phased approach to allow opportunities for the review and amendment of training materials and activities. FNFLF was the first project partner to begin UAV training, community mapping training, and data collection to develop Rapid Salmon Habitat Assessment Methodologies. The first FNFLF staff member received their Advanced UAV Pilot Licence in February 2022 and initial data collection was completed at two locations at Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations. FNFLF and partner organizations will continue to train other staff and implement activities at these and other identified sites throughout the remainder of the project.

About the First Nations Fisheries Legacy Fund (FNFLF)

The First Nations Fisheries Legacy Fund (FNFLF) is a collaboration of six First Nations in the Lower Mainland working to protect, conserve and restore the health of aquatic species and ecosystems. FNFC is a key partner of FNFLF and provides crucial operational support for the organization.

To learn more about FNFLF and its projects, please visit their website: www.fnfisherieslegacy.ca.

For more information, please contact Jenna Duncan, FNFLF Manager

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