

FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

COMMUNIQUE

March 2024



STRONGER TOGETHER

Convene - Elicit - Distill



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 Siyeʔe?

“Greetings: Are you all well, my esteemed friends (relations)?”

As I compose this Communique, it marks the upcoming conclusion of my tenure as the Executive Director at FNFC, scheduled for June. After 14 years in this role, I will be transitioning into semi-retirement. In pursuit of continuity and progress, FNFC has appointed Stu Barnes as the Associate Executive Director, who will assume the full Executive Director role on June 1, 2024. During the 2024 FNFC Annual Assembly held on February 21st and 22nd at the Harrison Hot Springs Resort, a ceremonial transition of leadership from me to Stu Barnes occurred.

I extend my gratitude for your support during my time at FNFC over the past decade. As I embark on a new journey, I kindly ask for your continued support for FNFC, with full confidence that it will thrive under Stu's capable leadership. Further details regarding the ED Succession Planning will be provided in the upcoming Communique update, scheduled for June 2024, aligning with Stu's official commencement as the Executive Director.

hay čxʷ ǵə,

Jordan Point
Executive Director

2024 FNFC Annual General Assembly

Building a Made in BC Salmon Recovery Approach

FNFC extends our sincere gratitude to all the esteemed guests who participated in our 2024 Annual General Assembly, held on February 21st and 22nd at the Harrison Hot Springs Resort. There were over 100 participants, including members of First Nation communities across BC, as well as representatives from the Province of BC and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Together, we collectively explored the theme of 'Building a Made in BC Salmon Recovery Approach.' Their presence and invaluable contributions played a pivotal role in the event's success.

The first day of the Assembly was dedicated to sharing FNFC's strategic vision and our work in developing a Trilateral Salmon Accord, fostering greater coordination among Crown governments and First Nations to recover and restore salmon populations in BC. The second day focused on freshwater initiatives, such as the Water Security Strategy and Water Table, and highlighted the achievements made through the Wild Salmon Resiliency Grant. We were honored to have federal and provincial leaders, including Assistant Deputy Minister James Mack from the Province of BC and David Didluck, Associate Regional Director General of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, share updates on their respective initiatives. Regional Chief Terry Teegee provided an insightful update on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations.



This year, we also worked to incorporating First Nations' culture into the Assembly. The Sts'ailes Sasquatch Dancers shared a beautiful intergenerational performance with us, which included the representation of multiple generations of dancers, of which one boy was only three years old. The blanketing and naming ceremony, Stax^Wi – Meltelek, commemorating Jordan Point's career at FNFC and his transition to Stu Barnes, was also hosted by the band. Every intricate detail, from the cedar they stood on to the songs sung, was beautifully explained.



FNFC Council Delegates & Jordan Point



Stu Barnes & Jordan Point

The 2024 Spring Assembly was a testament to the ongoing commitment of the FNFC to protect and restore salmon populations in British Columbia. We eagerly anticipate further discussions and meaningful outcomes at our next Assembly!

Corporate Services Unit

FNFC Financial Model – Developing Stability & Predictability

Another positive year!

As we approach the March 31, 2024 fiscal year end, early financial results are indicating that we continue to move along in further developing financial stability. Through hard work and working in unity, the FNFC team and Council continue to diversify its revenue sources and build an organization that can navigate through these uncertain times. As a result, several new funding agreements were secured throughout the year with various organizations that support the FNFC mandate.

Some highlights include:

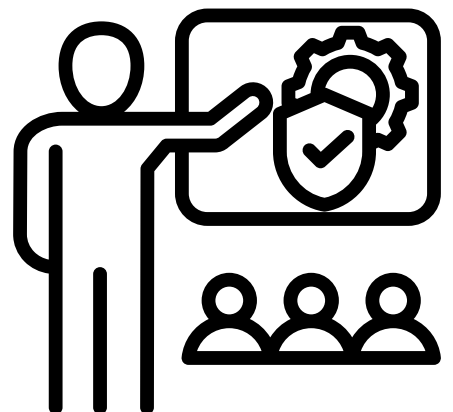
- Pacific Salmon Foundation – Multi year agreement for the protection and restoration of wild salmon through partnerships and projects
- Province of BC – Multi year capacity building for FNFC to support various projects with the province
- Real Estate Foundation of BC – FNFC support for co-development of the Watershed Security Fund
- New Relationship Trust - Supporting policy development

Staff Training Sessions

Over the last few years, FNFC has been developing resources to help manage FNFC's growth.

Soon to be developed and released, this summer's FNFC internal training sessions:

- IT – Protecting yourself and your family from online Fraud.
- Pension and Benefits – How to build a 6-figure portfolio and have a healthy lifestyle.
- Finance – Take the fear out of managing your Finances.
- HR – In today's marketplace, you need HR skills to advance your career.
- AI - Learning to work along with Artificial Intelligence



New Additions to the FNFC Team

Over the last several months, we've added one more staff to the FNFC Team!

Nina Villegas – Finance Manager, Corporate Services



Feel free to reach out to make an introduction to Nina and congratulate her for joining the FNFC!

FNFC Wild Pacific Salmon Resiliency Grant – Pilot Project

Indigenous Stewardship Fund – Planting the seeds for a successful future!

For the fiscal year 2023/2024 - \$500,000 was identified as a Pilot Project (10 projects to receive a \$50,000 grant to support FNs communities and organizations in BC in their efforts in wild salmon restoration and recovery. These funds are to be administered through the Indigenous Stewardship Fund (ISF).

A big thank you to the First Nations Fisheries Society (FNFS) and the Pacific Salmon Foundation for entering into a multi-year agreement for the protection and restoration of wild pacific salmon through partnerships and projects. The funds for the pilot project were made available from this agreement.

We are excited to announce that to date, 9 projects have been approved and funds are being rolled out to support their projects. Congratulations to the following organizations and the commencement of their projects!

- Gitanyow Huwlip Society
- Lower Fraser Fisheries AllianceFinance
- North Coast Skeena FN Stewardship Society
- Nuxalk Nation
- Secwepemc Fisheries Commission
- Skeena Fisheries Commission
- Skidegate Band Council
- Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance
- Wuikinuxv Nation Stewardship Department





2nd Annual - "Save Our Salmon" Golf Tournament

Let's get ready for another round of golf this summer!

Thanks to the success of last year's tournament, the FNFC has made it official. On September 29, 2023, the First Nations Fisheries Council approved the following motion:

"To further support the Indigenous Stewardship Fund (ISF) mandate and SOS campaigns, the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) and ISF approves continuing with an annual fundraising golf tournament that maximizes awareness, relationships, sponsorships and marketing opportunities, until otherwise instructed by the FNFC. The next FNFC/ISF golf tournament will be held in the summer 2024."

Here's a quick update on this year's "Save Our Salmon" Golf Tournament:

- The next "Save Our Salmon" Golf Tournament has been secured for Monday, July 22nd, 2024, to take place at the University Golf Club.
- An internal working group will be assembled in April 2024.
- To register as a foursome or attend the banquet? [Click Here!](#)
- To learn more about sponsorship opportunities or if you would like to donate items for the auction, email isabel@isfund.ca.



POLICY & FISH MANAGEMENT UNIT

FNFC Whole of Aquaculture Forum

On February 8-9th, 2024, the FNFC convened the Whole of Aquaculture Forum in Parksville, BC, the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Nations and home to the Snaw-Naw-As First Nation and the Qualicum First Nation. Over 80 delegates gathered, including First Nations in BC and representatives from federal and provincial governments, to explore the future of the aquaculture sector in British Columbia.

The theme of the forum: “Whole of Aquaculture” approach, was to solicit input towards building a sustainable, inclusive, and diverse aquaculture industry that aligns with First Nations’ food security and economic development objectives. The Whole of Aquaculture approach emphasizes a shift towards a more diverse aquaculture sector that incorporates different species and technologies, and to promote different forms of aquaculture in BC. It recognizes that BC First Nations are unique with different priorities, resources and capacities; and that diversity supports options for self-determination.

Several key topics were discussed including: i) a First Nation vision for BC’s aquaculture sector; ii) current and future opportunities in aquaculture including primary and secondary opportunities; iii) Federal and Provincial policies, regulations, and programs that can support this vision; iv) market access and the role of aquaculture in Canada's Blue Economy; v) sustainability and funding capacity; and vi) partnership opportunities supporting First Nations aquaculture development.

Following a mix of plenaries, panels discussions, and breakout sessions, several themes emerged as important areas of focus including:

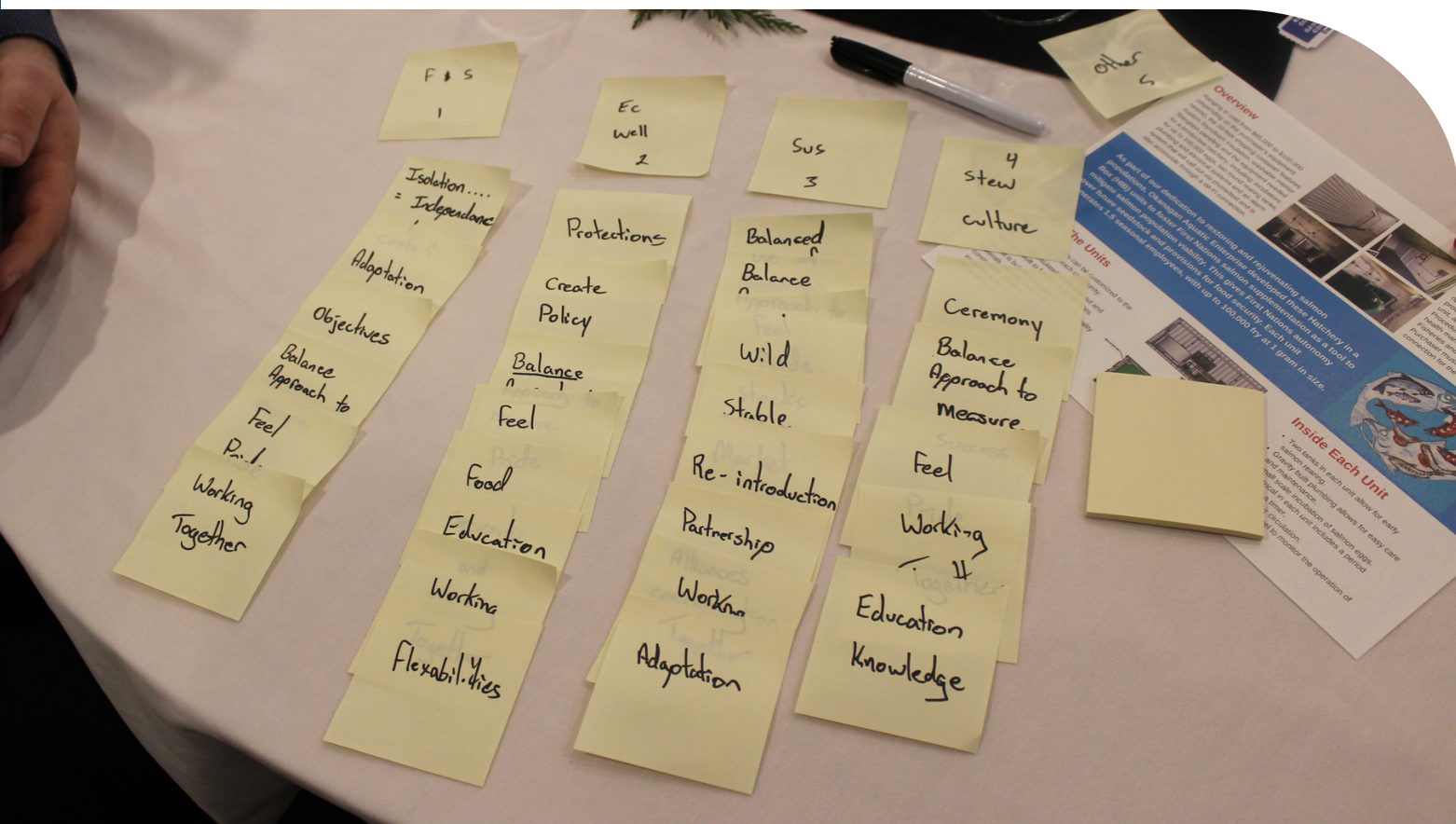
- a) diversification of the sector
- b) sustainable development
- c) respect for First Nations' Rights and Title and knowledge systems
- d) the importance of First Nations-led research
- e) the imperative for collaborative approaches, meaningful engagement, and inclusive partnerships between First Nations, Crown agencies, and industry stakeholders



These themes share an underlying principle that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not compatible with First Nations in BC, and that embracing diverse species and technologies is essential to ensuring equitable opportunities for First Nations to contribute to the industry. Canada's commitments to UNDRIP necessitate equitable partnerships with First Nations through principles of co-development, co-governance, co-management, and co-enforcement. Funding and capacity-building efforts should prioritize collaborative initiatives, with shifts towards more patient-capital funding for long-term success. Lastly, investment to First Nations brand development is critical to capitalize on global interest and effectively showcase First Nation culture and businesses.

Looking ahead, the FNFC will synthesize feedback gathered from the forum into a comprehensive "What We Heard" report. FNFC is also developing a Strategies Options Paper, which aims to serve as a roadmap for the strategic development of aquaculture in BC and the vision discussed at the forum. This paper will provide recommendations on the key themes, and steps towards shaping the future of BC's aquaculture sector that is inclusive, sustainable and diverse in collaboration with First Nations, Crown governments, and industry partners.

For more information, please contact **Mike Gray** at mike@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.



Legislation and Fisheries Policy Updates

UNDA Action Plan and Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP)

The Government of Canada released its United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA) Action Plan in June 2023, to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration, and to identify measures needed to ensure federal laws and policies are consistent with the UN Declaration. This Action Plan (2023-28) includes 181 measures, with DFO leading 11 of these measures. In support of First Nations in BC in the context of fisheries and aquatic resources and UNDRIP implementation, the FNFC released the Stemming the Tide: Getting Below the Surface Report. This report was developed through feedback from First Nations at two FNFC hosted policy forums in February and March 2023, and provides a list of key recommendations and actionable steps to collaborate with First Nations. The paper also introduces an Indigenous framework as a collaborative tool between First Nations and Crown agencies. The framework attempts to weave policy priorities from both Indigenous lens and Western systems, and ways to meet the interests and holistic priorities of First Nations. It is designed to be adaptable for different First Nations to utilize and bring forward their specific interests on policy priorities with Crown agencies. Looking ahead, a companion toolkit is in development and will accompany the FNFC's Stemming the Tide report. FNFC also plans to host Tier 1 Policy Forums in 2024 to convene First Nations in BC, with the intent to focus further on the UNDA Action Plan, with a focus on Actions 36 and 37 (legislation, policies and collaborative structures).

The 1999 Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP) is DFO's operational guidelines for the allocation of Pacific salmon amongst First Nations, commercial, and recreational harvest groups. In 2018, as a result of the Ahousaht decision, the policy was found to be an unjustified infringement of five Nuu-chah-nulth Nations' (Ahousaht, Ehattesaht, Hesquiaht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht) Aboriginal rights to fish and sell fish. Specifically, the SAP accords priority to the recreational fishery over the five Nations' rights-based sale fishery for Chinook and Coho salmon. As a result, DFO was mandated to undertake a review and update of the SAP to correct the infringement.

FNFC's role in the SAP Review process is to support and coordinate with First Nations participating in the review. We also share regular updates with First Nations about the progress of the review. Since last year, FNFC is convening a SAP Working Group to facilitate a Tier 1 space for discussions, outside of DFO's hosted Tier 2 (FNs-DFO Committee) and Tier 3 (Multi-Party Working Group) meetings. There have been 18 SAP-related meetings since April 2023, including Tier 1, 2 and 3. Looking ahead into next year, FNFC is developing a series of discussion papers to support SAP engagements.

These discussion papers will focus on key topics and priorities that First Nations participants have raised during the SAP Review, and outline policy recommendations for SAP changes. FNFC also plans to host regional meetings with First Nations broadly to update on the status of the review, as well to solicit feedback and discussions on potential changes to the policy.



Pacific Salmon Commission First Nations Caucus

Advancing the First Nations Caucus Strategic Plan and Succession Plan

The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) First Nations Caucus (FN Caucus) is a group of 30+ First Nations delegates who participate at the PSC process (Commissioners, Panels and Technical Committees). The FN Caucus has been in place since 2002 and functions within the Canadian Section of the PSC. During its tenure, the FN Caucus has worked to become a recognized participating body at all levels of PSC engagement, providing a coordinated and knowledgeable First Nations voice on priorities and initiatives, as well as on the underlying Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST). The FN Caucus is a convening body that brings forward collective concerns and advice, based on participant experience and regional processes. FN Caucus members are also First Nations leaders and/or subject matter experts on salmon fisheries management who work with First Nations and First Nations Regional Fisheries Organizations.

The FNFC and the FN Caucus worked together to develop and implement a FN Caucus Strategic Plan and Succession Plan. These plans set out goals and actions towards increasing the capacity of First Nations to participate at the PSC, and to improve accountability and communications of the PSC process with First Nations broadly. These documents also serve as key areas of collaboration with DFO as part their commitments to reconciliation and UNDRIP and meaningful engagements and collaboration with First Nations in BC.

Over the last year, the FN Caucus have made notable progress towards three of the goals as set out in the Strategic Plan and Succession Plan:

1. Increasing the human capacity of FN Caucus through three new Technical Committee members at the Northern Boundary and Coho Technical Committees
2. Advance relationships with southern US Tribes that participate at the PSC; and
3. Work with DFO to appoint the inaugural First Nations Co-chair at the Fraser River Panel

Progress on these goals is critical as the FN Caucus looks to secure additional resources and capacity in preparation for the re-negotiation of the PST. With the current PST expiring in 2028, FNFC and the FN Caucus are working with DFO to develop an engagement plan with First Nations that is early and fulsome. It is imperative that First Nations in BC have the opportunity to have their voices heard, and to be able to communicate the priorities, concerns, and recommendations of Nations in the leadup and during renegotiations.

A key obstacle that needs to be overcome is the lack of adequate resources to support the FN Caucus and proposed engagements with First Nations. Efforts continue to secure additional resources in a timely manner to properly support capacity development, succession planning, facilitating engagement sessions, and resourcing to support First Nations participation. The FN Caucus is looking forward to building from this year's success, and to further implementing the FN Caucus' Strategic Plan and Succession Plan.

Mass-Marking and Mark-Selective Fisheries

Update on DFO's Activities Advancing the Proposed Framework

Over the last few years, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) have taken incremental steps to introduce and implement Mass Marking and Mark Selective Fisheries (MM & MSF) in BC. Since then, DFO have started several pilot recreational Chinook MSFs along the B.C. coast and have signaled their intent to expand this approach. DFO's proposed MM/MSF framework introduces a new management approach to fisheries in BC. FNFC has heard a number of concerns raised by First Nations in BC about the implications of MSF on fisheries management, conservation and recovery efforts, and potential impacts to First Nations priority fishing rights.

Mass-Marking refers to the practice of utilizing a fin clip or other method of external marking on large groups of fish to identify hatchery-origin fish and differentiate them from wild stocks. A mark selective fishery is one in which only marked fish may be retained and any unmarked fish must be released.

In advancing MM/MSF implementation in BC, DFO released a discussion paper outlining their proposed framework to implement a MM/MSF in several areas along the South Coast. DFO also started a Technical Working Group to discuss technical considerations relating to MM and MSF. So far, nine technical workshops have occurred. FNFC have continued to provide feedback to DFO, raising concerns about DFO's approach to MSF pilots and outstanding technical issues that should be resolved before the pilot fisheries were approved, and expansion considered. Some of these issues include: i) low mark rates and portion of sub-legal Chinook populations in pilot areas; ii) lack of sufficient catch-monitoring to evaluate MSF pilots in BC; iii) MSFs in mixed stock fisheries can infringe on First Nations priority fishing rights; iv) issues relating to DFO's reference fisheries; v) increased impacts of fisheries related incidental mortality (FRIM) and non-lethal impacts on at-risk Chinook populations; vi) impacts on Chinook stock assessment programs; vii) lack of long-term funding to monitor MSFs, etc.

FNFC intends to continue bringing these concerns to DFO and will be looking to host a Tier 1 technical session to provide updates on DFO's progress with MM/MSF, review the key concerns relating to MM/MSFs, and to support First Nations that may wish to learn more about this management approach.

For more information, please send an email to **Janson Wong** at janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.



HABITAT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT

Tier 1 Engagement for Wave 3 of the Fish & Fish Habitat Protection Program (FFHPP)

The FNFC is hosting Tier 1 engagement sessions to support the development of policies and regulations required to implement the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of the Fisheries Act.

In 2019, the Fisheries Act was amended to include extended protections to all fish and fish habitat. In an effort to develop new regulations, policies, frameworks, and guidance required to implement the extended protections of the Fisheries Act, DFO launched the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program (FFHPP). The implementation of the FFHPP is supported by a multi-wave engagement framework, with Indigenous Peoples and key stakeholders, that began in 2021.

For the 2023 - 2024 year, FFHPP engaged on the following Wave 3 topics:

- Draft Policy for Applying Measures to Offset Harmful Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat
- Draft Guidelines for Establishing and Managing Fish Habitat Banks
- Framework for Aquatic Species at Risk Conservation
- New Interim Standard and Codes of Practice
- Regional Restoration Priorities Plan*

FNFC hosted seven virtual Tier 1 engagement sessions throughout the year which focused on Wave 3 topics and overarching and/or engagement-process related feedback. Feedback from each of these engagement sessions will be summarized and sent to DFO to provide a cohesive message regarding First Nations in BC priorities and areas of broad concern regarding the implementation of the fish and fish habitat protection provisions in the new Fisheries Act.

For the 2024 – 2025 year, FNFC will be supporting engagement on Wave 4 FFHPP topics (topics not yet determined). In addition, FNFC, along with DFO's Restoration Centre of Expertise, will be coordinating combined Tier 1 and Tier 2 engagement sessions regarding the draft Restoration Priority Plan for the Pacific Region. Four in-person and one virtual session will be held, as per the below schedule, to accommodate engagement with First Nations across BC:

Coast Region: April 11th, Parksville

Interior Region: April 30th, Kelowna

North Region: April 18th, Terrace

Virtual Session: May 7th

Lower Fraser Region: April 24th, Abbotsford



The intended outcomes/goals for this work include:

- Identifying First Nations in BC's shared priorities and areas of broad concern
- Increasing collaboration between First Nations across BC
- Consolidating feedback and/or recommendations to DFO

*Note: The Regional Restoration Priority Plan arose from the FFHPP Wave 2 engagement in 2022 but is being developed by DFO's Restoration Centre for Expertise in the Pacific Region.

If you are interested in attending future Tier 1 engagement sessions relating to FFHPP and/or the Restoration Priority Plan for the Pacific Region, please send an email to **Lauren McNeilly** at lauren@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.

First Nations Water Caucus and Water Table Update

The Water Table is a collaborative process that is comprised of regional delegates from the First Nations Water Caucus and multiple Province of BC ministries with responsibility for fresh water.

Table delegates make **consensus-based, co-developed recommendations** to provincial and First Nations' decision-makers about matters of mutual interest related to fresh water and watershed security of province-wide interest. The First Nations Water Caucus brings together **up to 15 First Nation regional delegates from major watersheds across British Columbia** to discuss and identify shared strategic priorities and interests related to fresh water and watershed security.

The Water Caucus and Water Table respectively have meetings approximately every 4 weeks. Some activities the Water Table have accomplished since December 2023 are:

- Drafting and approving a Terms of Reference.
- Continuing to co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy (WSS), which plans to be launched in Spring 2024 with an Implementation Plan to follow.

Some activities the Water Caucus have accomplished since December 2023 are:

- Drafting and approving a Terms of Reference
- Continuing to work with REFBC on the co-development of the Watershed Security Fund.

On March 6th, 2023, the Province of BC announced the release of the [Watershed Security Strategy Intentions Paper](#) for public engagement and a \$100 million investment to kickstart the Watershed Security Fund. The Fund is being stewarded by the Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) in partnership with the Water Caucus and FNFC. Since March 2023, REFBC, the Water Caucus, and FNFC have been working together to co-develop a permanent, growing stream of funding for the Watershed Security Fund.

The Water Caucus, FNFC, and REFBC are prioritizing a model of co-development. As well as, creating an effective process and mechanisms for working together to ensure that First Nations voices and perspectives are included in watershed initiatives and projects across the province, and to set a precedent for a new model of collaboration and stewardship.



**First Nations
Fisheries Council**
of British Columbia

Next Steps:

- Finalize the recommended Watershed Security Strategy with anticipated release of Spring 2024
- Co-develop a recommended Implementation Plan to support the implementation of the Watershed Security Strategy actions
- Continue to work with REFBC to support co-development of the Watershed Security Fund
- FNFC will continue to update Chiefs and Council of this process as it progresses.



Ted Zimmerman and Brian Holmes presented on the theme of working together for water, highlighting the efforts of the First Nations Water Caucus and the B.C. First Nations Water Table at the 2024 FNFC Annual Assembly in February.

If you would like to learn more about the Water Caucus and Table, please send an email to **Madison Rattai** at madison@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.

PARTNERSHIPS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS UNIT

Marine and Coastal Management

A Year in Review

The Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) team has had a productive and impactful year! The MCM team has consistently heard from Nations that governance is a key priority and has been working hard to advance governance conversations at a variety of tables.

The MCM team helps convene an advisory committee of delegates from First Nations to inform Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) Marine Spatial Planning initiative in the southern BC region. This committee has begun the important work of identifying governance priorities, recommendations, and considerations specific to this initiative and planning region. These conversations will inform a discussion paper that summarizes some existing governance models and how elements of these models could be applied to Southern BC Marine Spatial Planning. This paper will serve as a tool and resource to facilitate future governance conversations.

Through the Cumulative Effects of Marine Shipping (CEMS) initiative with Transport Canada (TC), the MCM team alongside First Nations have begun exploring mitigation and management strategies to address the impacts of shipping on the South Coast. These strategies will help bolster Nations' ability to exercise their Rights and Title by guiding shipping practices in their territories. Through the spring and summer, the MCM team will be supporting community listening sessions, which is one strategy that will help ensure community input is guiding the assessment and the resulting mitigation and management recommendations.

The theme of governance has persisted in work with the Province as well. Over the past year, Nations have informed the drafting of a provincial Coastal Marine Strategy. The MCM team looks forward to reading the drafted Strategy later in 2024 and helping facilitate a review of the draft Strategy with First Nations' leadership. The MCM team will continue to emphasize the need for strong co-governance commitments from the Strategy as the Province looks towards the implementation stage of the work.

Through all of this work, building relationships has remained central to the MCM team's approach.

Developing strong governance approaches with First Nations necessitates building authentic and trusting relationships between BC First Nations as well as between First Nations and federal and provincial governments. You can hear more about how FNFC is supporting relationship building through a video from Fall 2023 that can be found on this [link](#).

It is bittersweet to announce that the manager for Marine and Coastal Management, Courtney Halvorson, will be moving on at the end of March after almost three years at the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC. Courtney's leadership and commitment to this team will leave lasting impacts and she will be sincerely missed!



MCM team members Courtney Halvorson, Megan Stewart, and Etana Tam provided support for a filming project at T'Sou-ke and Tsawout First Nations as part of our Oceans Protection Plan initiative.



FNFC Communique - March 2024