

Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum
Collaborative Fisheries Governance
Draft Discussion Paper – December 2, 2008

Introduction

“The Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum was established to provide an opportunity for all interests to work towards a fully integrated sustainable salmon fishery in ways that respect the Wild Salmon Policy and serve both people and salmon.

The Forum works through the incubation of new ideas/ approaches/ possibilities to the issues identified by the Forum which can draw support across sectors and bring them forward to inform existing decision-making structures, both within governments and sector based organizations.” (excerpt from January 29, 2007 Forum Descriptor)

The issue of fisheries governance is one of those issues. The Forum operates within the context of a system that recognizes the overall jurisdiction of governments and the need for development of government to government relationships between First Nations, Federal and Provincial Governments at a variety of scales. Within this context the Forum is actively considering a shift from the current centralized, authority based approach to a more decentralized, consensus based approach that recognizes the multiple interests at play in the conservation and management of salmon fisheries.

What is Collaborative Fisheries Governance?

Collaborative fisheries governance is the process of reaching shared outcomes and resolving differences among all sectors and governmental interests in a manner consistent with the conservation and sustainable management of our salmon resource. Improved collaboration leads to more effective decision-making with a broad basis of support and more enduring outcomes.

A collaborative fisheries governance model is needed now because:

- Issues of access and priority are causing increasing divisiveness and unrest between and among governments and stakeholders.
- Growing public concern about the future of our salmon resource and the on-going conflicts amongst users about access and allocation of harvestable surpluses;
- Uncertainty exists over the long term effects that climate change will have on ecosystems and communities.
- Issues are more complex and harder to resolve, with more demands to be met from more elements of society;

- Governments at all levels do not have the capacity to meet these challenges on their own;
- First Nations are seeking a key role and greater participation in resource management decision-making; and
- Fishing sectors and their supporting economic base need better certainty of access over the longer term.

The governance working group has undertaken a review of the academic literature on fisheries governance and co-management experiences world-wide. Analyses of case studies indicates that no single universal model works in every fishery, but there is universal agreement that good governance is an essential ingredient of effective fisheries management.

Examples of collaborative governance are emerging in Pacific Northwest, and these are attempting to fill needs at specific geographic scales. A workshop in November was designed to explore with the Forum a number of these examples. The December workshop seeks to determine if there is a willingness among governments and key sectors to work toward a new framework for collaborative governance that respects, and builds on, the foundational role and responsibilities of governments.

It is important to recognize that a necessary component of a new integrated fisheries governance structure is an effective governance structure and process through which First Nations interact with the federal and provincial governments.

It is understood that the process discussed in this paper needs to fit within a framework which supports First Nations working on a bilateral basis with B.C. and/or Canada with respect to issues that relate to their interests, rights and title.

What Do We Want to Achieve?

The desired outcome would be to develop a common vision and series of progressive steps to move towards collaborative fisheries governance.

These steps would include:

- Dedicating efforts to address unresolved fisheries issues which exist between First Nations and the Federal and Provincial Governments;
- Articulating the broad range of interests in the fishery;
- Identifying a set of essential attributes of an effective collaborative governance model and barriers to realizing these attributes;
- Developing a strategy for over-coming barriers to effective governance and reconciling fisheries interests that appear to be in conflict; and
- Establishing the relationship between governments that will be the foundation for collaborative fisheries governance.