

B. C. Federation of Drift Fishers Report to SFAB Main Board Feb 4th 2018

Interior Fraser Steelhead

The BCFDF has been very active in profiling the plight of Fraser River steelhead, particularly Thompson/Chilcotin fish. We have joined with other organizations in promoting a SARA listing for Thompson/Chilcotin fish which are beyond “Extreme Conservation Concern” and are projected to be extinct within 5 years unless immediate recovery plans are implemented.

Commercial and First Nations gill netting has been identified for many years as a major contributor to the demise. A motion is to be introduced at the Main Board meeting demanding that ALL fisheries be truly selective, minimizing impact on non targeted species. The BCFDF and others have met with both provincial and federal politicians lobbying for significant change in how these steelhead are managed. These demands for more selective fisheries applies to both commercial and First Nations sectors.

We suggest the recreational sector has demonstrated leadership for many years in ensuring our fishing methods minimize mortality on steelhead stocks. We have major concerns that the cooperation between DFO and the province on steelhead management has been dysfunctional which has contributed to the severe decline of stocks.

It should be noted that the coalition of concerned organizations in B.C. represents in excess of 150,000 people in B.C. Petitions of concern submitted have represented thousands of concerned anglers world wide.

Fraser River Peacemakers

The Peacemakers has entered it's 10th year of attempting to reduce conflict on the Fraser River and preserve safe respectful fisheries for the future generations of all sectors. This past year has seen the creation of an official society and recognition of the significant past progress through receipt of the prestigious “National Recreational Fisheries Award”. To ensure participation by senior Ottawa DFO staff the presentation has been postponed to mid February.

Considerable discussion has taken place within Peacemakers recently to ensure the process, particularly conflict resolution, remains timely and meaningful. Peacemakers continues to be held out as an enduring process demonstrating that past adversarial sectors can work jointly toward preserving the fishery for our children and grandchildren.

Fraser River Sport Fishing Alliance

The BCFDF has been a leader in creation of the FRSA with a mandate to protect and enhance the recreational fishing opportunities on the Fraser River. It is viewed by many that the continued erosion of our fishing opportunities could lead to the eventual demise of this priceless Canadian heritage.

The FRSA mandate also includes conservation as the primary priority and recognition of First Nations constitutional rights. Objectives of the FRSA include working with all groups and advisory boards such as the SFAB who share the goal of protecting and enhancing fishing opportunities.

It should be noted the same concerns are expressed in the Skeena River system thus any actions toward preserving our fishery on the Fraser could be emulated in the Skeena area.

Fraser River Round Table

The BCFDF is currently reviewing options and interest for the creation of a Fraser River Round Table which would include all sectors and be representative of all species fished in the Fraser. We appreciate the logistics involved in getting together all the sectors and the challenge of in excess of 100 First Nations bands on the Fraser River. We believe the communication barriers removed by the Peacemakers process could assist in creation of this Round Table and could work effectively with Peacemaker objectives.

As demonstrated with the success of Round Tables in other areas. A Fraser River Round Table could prove beneficial for all sectors.

A motion for DFO support will be reviewed at the Main Board meeting.

Demonstration fishery

The BCFDF will again request DFO approval for a sanctioned "Recreational Demonstration Fishery" which will further demonstrate the ability of the Fraser River recreational angler to fish selectively for Chinook while avoiding other stocks of concern. Demo fisheries have been authorized in the past for other sectors thus we believe it's appropriate that our request on behalf of Fraser River anglers be granted.

It's not acceptable that the Fraser River be closed to recreational fishing from the mouth to Prince George to protect a species that that could be avoided through selective fishing. These closures prevent family bonding fishing opportunities and represents millions of dollars of lost revenue to Fraser River communities.

The Fraser River recreational community can again offer all the resources required to ensure this "Demonstration Sockeye Avoidance Fishery" will be conducted properly and provide the documented evidence required to keep our fishery open.

It should be noted that DFO had supported the concept last year but declined support suggesting time constraints.

Rod Clapton

President