



COMMUNIQUÉ

First Nations Fishery Report Cites Conservation Challenges

Vancouver – May 12th, 2006, Vancouver, BC -- First Nations must cooperate among their communities -- as well as with the commercial and recreational fisheries -- to rebuild and sustain British Columbia's wild salmon stocks. That is the conclusion of a background paper on First Nations salmon conservation perspectives released today by the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council.

The background paper cites the partnerships and co-management initiatives that have been successful in conserving salmon runs and sharing knowledge about fish populations. It also points to the importance of resolving intertribal issues over the allocation of salmon resources. This can be done through the adoption of principles to settle conflicts over competing fishing claims, and build cooperation to replace the current ad hoc fishing access arrangements among First Nations communities along salmon migration routes. The authors explain that this is essential for effective fisheries conservation while recognizing legally protected priority rights to salmon.

The background paper entitled *First Nations, Salmon Fisheries and the Rising Importance of Conservation* was authored by Kerri Garner and Ben Parfitt. It is the second in a series of three papers commissioned by the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council. The first paper was issued last year on the commercial fishery, while the final one on the recreational fishery will be released shortly.

The authors explained that:

“...improperly conducted and timed harvesting – no matter who conducts it – can have tremendous negative consequences for all involved. For that reason, all who are involved need to do so in a matter of cooperation and respect, never losing sight of the fact that the resource itself is what matters most.”

The history and development of First Nations involvement in the commercial salmon fishery is a focal point of the background paper. It notes the significance of selective fishing methods that are meant to enable salmon to be caught while protecting stocks, such as Thompson coho, that have been depleted. It refers to examples across the province's rivers and coastal areas, including Vancouver Island and Skeena River.

The Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council provides information and advice to the governments of Canada and British Columbia. It commissions reports such as this background paper to help inform the public discussion on wild salmon and steelhead stocks and their freshwater and ocean habitats.

To obtain an on-line version of this background paper, go to: www.fish.bc.ca

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