



COMMUNIQUE

SURVIVAL OF COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP DEPENDS ON NEW APPROACH, SHIFT TO RECOVERY PLANNING, SAYS REPORT

July 27, 2004, Vancouver – Community stewardship groups have had a vital role in taking care of salmon habitat concludes a new report commissioned jointly by the Vancouver Foundation and the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (PFRCC). That report is available at www.fish.bc.ca. “The continued effort of stewardship groups to look after salmon habitat is needed. Volunteers and community groups represent a great pool of enthusiasm, their efforts are positive and lead to greater public awareness of the importance of salmon habitat stewardship,” says the Honourable John A. Fraser, chair of the PFRCC. “However, this report shows that there needs to be effective scientific monitoring to measure success or failures. It raises the question: with less government support, where will the money come from to do the projects themselves and the necessary monitoring?”

Prepared by Brian Harvey and David Greer the report titled, *Reality Stewardship: Survival of the Fittest for Community Salmon Groups*, says that after ten years of the federal and provincial governments encouraging communities to get involved in salmon habitat stewardship, government funding for those projects has evaporated and many groups feel left out in the cold. Those recent cuts have amounted to more than \$50 million in programs that stewards were once able to access. As a result some groups and valuable programs have already collapsed. As one example Vancouver Island’s Kirby Creek salmon counting fence, run by displaced fishermen, is now dismantled and valuable information which DFO relied upon to manage its fish stocks is no longer available.

Thousands of stewards affiliated with local community groups have played a valuable role in habitat restoration and in raising public awareness of the fragile nature of the resource and its supporting ecosystems. Their contribution to awareness alone makes community projects worth continuing.

The contribution of many community groups has been undercut by a general lack of monitoring that makes it hard to point to “hard”, long-term results. Since attempts to “restore” habitat are in the nature of experiments, the lack of

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quantification of success should be offset, in the future, by more rigorous monitoring.

The report concludes that community salmon stewardship will look much different over the next decade. A “survival of the fittest” climate will require groups to form alliances and rely more on funds from private sources. Limited government funds will shift the focus of salmon stewardship towards recovery planning, as required by the new Species at Risk Act, an activity that will also appeal to private funders. Creation and implementation of recovery plans will allow volunteers and professionals to work together rather than compete for limited funds, and requires the science-based, planning approach that has been missing from ad-hoc community stewardship. By setting measurable goals, a recovery planning approach is also more attractive to funders.

The report concludes with five recommendations, essentially a set of survival skills that community groups need to adopt. They are:

- Forming consortia with fund-raising and management skills and local political support
- Getting on board the recovery planning ship before it sails without them
- Raising awareness and becoming vocal advocates of salmon stewardship
- For projects aimed at gathering data, defining goals right from the start
- For hatchery projects, staying abreast of agency policies

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