



# Update on recent activities and engagement related to Fraser Steelhead

Presentation slides for Forum on Conservation and  
Harvest Planning for Fraser Salmon

Jan. 25, 2017



# Background

- Significant public interest in the steelhead file, especially in the Fraser, in light of poor returns to interior Fraser stocks (2015, 2016)
- Primary stocks comprising the “Interior Fraser River” (IFR) steelhead:
  - Thompson
  - Chilcotin
- Late-run summer timing
  - Enter Fraser River late August through mid-November
  - Run timing overlaps with Fraser sockeye (esp. late run), pink, coho, chum and are encountered in fisheries targeting these stocks



## 2016 returns

- The Provincial Government's 2016 in-season estimate of Interior Fraser River Steelhead spawner abundance was approx. 560 individuals.
  - well below pre-season expectations
  - record low abundance for Thompson
  - near record low abundance for Chilcotin steelhead



## DFO and B.C. roles

- For steelhead management, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) works together with the Province of British Columbia pursuant to various regulatory instruments and agreements.
- The province takes the lead in managing recreational fisheries targeting steelhead in B.C. in non-tidal waters. Other areas of work include steelhead stock assessment, and input into steelhead enhancement strategies and approaches.
- DFO engages in various activities related to steelhead, including:
  - Collection of information from test fisheries in the Fraser (Albion) & Skeena (Tye)
  - Development of fisheries management objectives and management measures designed to reduce interception impacts in salmon fisheries managed by DFO
  - Collection and reporting of catch and encounter information data from fisheries managed by DFO
  - Advancing general salmonid habitat restoration initiatives (programs are targeted at habitat improvement for DFO-managed salmon species, but are expected to yield benefits for steelhead as well)
  - Production of steelhead at DFO's Salmonid Enhancement Program facilities



## DFO and B.C. roles

- For B.C., several Ministries have involvement or interests in steelhead management:
  - Forests, Land and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO)
  - Ministry of Agriculture
  - Ministry of Environment
  - Ministry for Aboriginal Reconciliation
- Steelhead recreational fisheries are managed by FLNRO.
- B.C. has a “Seafood Secretariat” (housed in the Ministry of Agriculture) that serves to coordinate activities amongst the B.C. agencies as they relate to fisheries issues.



## DFO and B.C. roles

- Over time, diverse public perspectives have emerged around many elements of steelhead management, such as:
  - Acceptable levels of impact in interception fisheries, and appropriate measures for managing these impacts
  - Conditions under which steelhead angling (and retention) should be allowed
  - Strategies for hatchery production
  - Allocation approaches (incidental mortalities in commercial vs. recreational; also First Nations FSC interests)
  - Science and research approaches and priorities
- B.C. and Canada both pursue objectives related to management and conservation of fish, but have distinct planning processes for fisheries that we respectively manage.



## Recent areas of interface between BC & DFO

- DFO comments on the draft provincial Framework for Management of Steelhead in B.C. (January 2015 draft)
  - Framework now finalized (April 2016)
- DFO- BC MOU on steelhead enhancement under development
  - To confirm roles and responsibilities for steelhead production by DFO
- Involvement of B.C. and DFO in First Nations' / stakeholder processes related to IFMP development
  - E.g. B.C. participation in the IHPC process; FLNRO presentation to the JTWG
- Ongoing local DFO-B.C. engagement on operational issues (e.g. data exchange, localized management issues)



# Thompson Steelhead Working Group

- Principal participants:
  - First Nations from Thompson System (Secwepemc, N'laka'pamux)
  - DFO
  - BC – FLNRO
- Focus area = Thompson Steelhead Recovery plan development, inter-agency coordination on Thompson steelhead management issues
- Recently hosted Thompson steelhead assembly (Dec. 2)
  - Diverse First Nations' and stakeholder representation
  - Discussed various threats to Thompson steelhead and potential recovery actions





## Steelhead Sub-Committee

- IFMP focus
- Arose from discussions at IHPC process about the need for dedicated, multi-sector process for discussing steelhead issues, with engagement of DFO, B.C. and First Nations
- Initial conference call in late Sept, 2016
- Very early phases of development (i.e. no ToR)



## MSC Condition 14

- MSC = Marine Stewardship Council (eco-certification agency)
- Recently re-assessed B.C. to confirm MSC certification
- Various conditions identified for recertification; Condition 14 requires a strategy for addressing IF steelhead bycatch impacts in salmon fisheries
- Collaborative DFO – B.C. work to support a response
  - Includes a 4-year plan with structured technical and planning interface between DFO and B.C. - FLNRO.
  - DFO sees core elements of the plan as having general applicability beyond MSC, and supports advancing the work in coordination with existing planning / advisory / consultative processes.
- More detail in Annex 1



## Moving Forward

- Addressing steelhead issues continues to be complex because of inter-jurisdictional issues
- Recent activity and profile on Fraser steelhead issues is encouraging
- Effective coordination among different groups / agencies will be important in making progress



# ANNEX 1:

## Condition 14 (MSC) – proposed action plan



## Proposed Condition 14 Action Plan – summary of actions

- **Condition 14:**
  - *Primary species (IF steelhead) are highly likely to be above the PRI (point where recruitment is impaired), OR, If the species is below the PRI, there is either evidence of recovery or a demonstrably effective strategy in place between all MSC UoAs (units of assessment) which categorise this species as main, to ensure that they collectively do not hinder recovery and rebuilding*



## Proposed Condition 14 Action Plan – summary of actions

- *Commitment to application of the precautionary approach*
- **Year 1:**
  - *Review the key inputs, parameters and assumptions of the existing steelhead impact assessment model to improve the understanding of key fisheries, assumptions and parameters that influence projected Interior Fraser (IF) steelhead exposure or impacts in salmon fisheries.*
  - *DFO and the province will work towards agreement on conservation and management objectives for IF steelhead and other salmon stocks where salmon harvesting may have impacts on IF steelhead.*
  - *The potential set of fishery management actions will be consistent with the precautionary approach to management.*
  - *Management strategy evaluation via simulation will be used to assess the efficacy of different salmon harvesting approaches on IF steelhead stock recovery and rebuilding.*



# Proposed Action Plan – summary of actions

## **Year 2:**

- *technical and social and economic analysis of proposed management approaches using the agreed-to fishing plan evaluation framework.*
- *Identification of research and / or data collection initiatives that could assist in addressing key uncertainties in the emerging management framework.*

## **Year 3:**

- *Report on implementation of the management measures developed in year 2 using defined performance indicators. Consider further refinements to the management measures and fishery timing / closures / methods as required to ensure that performance targets are achieved.*

## **Year 4:**

- *Final report on implementation of the management plan and annual reporting on performance indicators.*