

Thompson Steelhead Public Forum

Meeting Summary as at Nov 18, 2015

Forum date: Nov 12, 2015, 6:30PM to 9:15PM

Location: Whitsemnitsa Complex, Cook's Ferry Indian Band, Spence's Bridge, BC

1. Welcome, Introductions

Chief David Walkem welcomed all present to the community. Elder and Councillor Pearl Hewitt welcomed everyone with a prayer. Paul Joe from Shackan Indian Band welcomed everyone with a drum song. Introductions were made around the room.

2. Sharing Stories and Significance of Steelhead

Chief Walkem highlighted the significance of steelhead to the Nlaka'pamux people, both for sustenance and economics. He showed some of the traditional fishing implements used to catch steelhead in winter. He suggested that steelhead are like the canary in the coalmine, indicating problems with the environment.

Mike Simpson, Senior Regional Manager, Fraser Basin Council based in Kamloops, welcomed others to share stories or significance of steelhead to them. People relayed stories of the size of steelhead caught fly fishing, the abundance of steelhead in decades past, the importance of getting steelhead back to sustainable numbers, concern for the existence of businesses and the survival of Spence's Bridge, sport fishing impacts and importance of steelhead to sustenance of First Nations.

3. Agenda, Objectives, Ground Rules, What's Been Done Since 2014

Mike Simpson reviewed the agenda and objectives for the evening, and proposed as ground rules that each presenter speak, followed by questions addressing the subject matter presented on.

Mike explained that the Fraser Basin Council facilitates the Thompson Steelhead Working Group, and captures their input; he or Fraser Basin Council don't have the answers and do not chair the process.

Mike provided a brief overview of what's been done since the last Thompson Steelhead Assembly in March 2014, held in Spence's Bridge:

- Last Thompson Steelhead Assembly in Spence's Bridge, March 2014
- 9 meetings in last year (MFLNRO, DFO, First Nations)
- Revised draft terms of reference for a Thompson Steelhead Committee
- Created planning framework outline - the steps to be used to create a recovery and management plan
- Communicated with 18 First Nations in June and September, provided a public update in July
- Initiated a recovery and management plan
- Funding applications submitted; some successful
- Related work on Nicola watershed on water flows

4. Update on Status, Management and Initiatives related to Thompson Steelhead

Rob Bison, Fisheries Stock Assessment Biologist, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) in Kamloops provided an **in-season update on steelhead**. In summary, steelhead populations are variable, but are at record lows this year with an estimated 440 spawners returning, and are in extreme conservation concern. It is difficult to predict recovery potential in the future due to the variability of returns in the past.

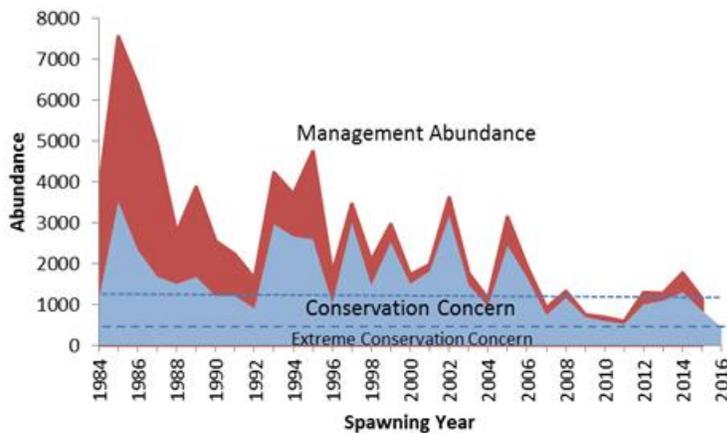


Figure 1. Pre-fishery abundance (red), spawner abundance (blue) in relation to conservation classifications.

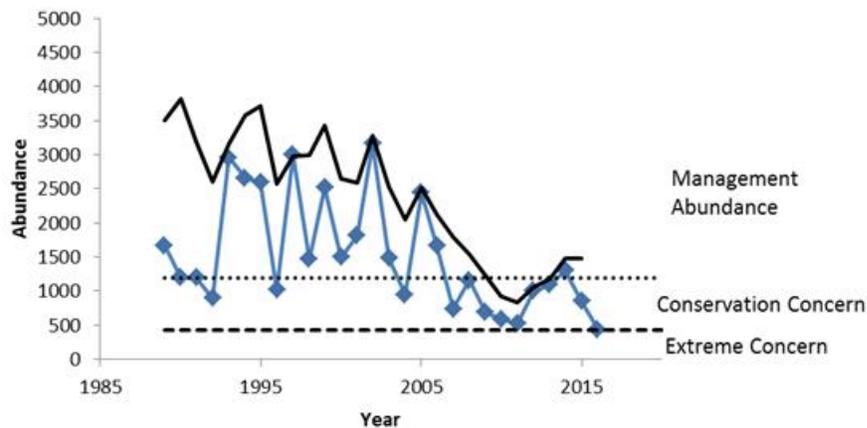


Figure 2. Spawner abundance (diamond line) and rebuilding potential (solid line). Rebuilding potential has changed over time.

Q - Does the sport fishery catch and release program negatively affect steelhead?

A - This is probably one of the best managed fisheries in the province. It is a low impact activity.

Q - Define “recovery potential” and how it is measured?

A - It is basically how many fish can be produced from the parent generation at the current level of productivity...if productivity is high and they are producing high numbers, the fishery can get depleted further and still recover. We can estimate this. The problem is that the rate of return is changing over time, it is hard to make a good estimate for the future.

Q - Since the opening of the chum fishery, how do you figure the chum fishery into the projections?

A - If the steelhead mortality effect of the Fraser chum fishery upstream of the test fishing site is similar to the average since 1989, then the mortality effect of the chum fishery is accounted for in the projection.

Q - Pacific salmon are very aggressive colonizers, in pre-contact history, fisheries virtually disappeared and then reappeared. Could the same happen with steelhead?

A - 1880s are earliest records for steelhead, 1920s catch in the Lower Fraser was 20000. There was a widespread decline in abundance through the mid part of the century....strange pattern of super low abundance followed by super high abundance.

Q - Does the trout mortality have an effect on steelhead, do we need a trout fishery regulation change?

A - Regulation is an option on trout fisheries. Rainbow trout population do not seem to be in any significant amount of trouble.

Comment - First Nations are not in the business of managing a sport fishery. Trout are an important part of my people's diet, it is our Aboriginal right; no support for a trout catch and release fishery.

Mike Simpson gave an overview of Friday's **government to government meetings**. While the presentation content cannot be shared in print here, the content of two documents that are proposed to be endorsed were discussed on-screen: a Thompson Steelhead Committee terms of reference; and a planning framework outline that outlines comprehensive steps to undertake to build a recovery and management plan for Thompson Steelhead. Mike noted that while it is recognized there is significant interest from fishing groups and local government, the management of steelhead is a responsibility of federal and provincial governments, and Aboriginal rights are affirmed in the Constitution Act (1982) and subsequent court decisions; hence the tripartite nature of the meetings. Mike committed to asking the government to government meeting participants about public release of material at Friday's meeting.

Q - Time frame on steelhead group work?

A - Would like to move this along as fast as we can.

Q - Plans for future public meetings?

A - Will ask tomorrow whether meeting results can be made public.

Q - Areas of concern are pretty ambitious...any ideas as to how to gather data regarding where steelhead go when they are in the ocean?

A - Linkages are important, this isn't the only place where discussions will take place. Data gaps are significant. Yes, ambitious, but all of that needs to be addressed to have a functional, integrated, comprehensive plan. The 2014 [David Levy report](#) is a public document, lays out the science questions, show gaps etc. doesn't give recommendations but shows the problem areas. We are using this as a starting point, identifies some of the threats to steelhead etc. can provide it by email.

Brigid Payne, Resource Manager, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in Vancouver gave an update on the **Integrated Fisheries Management Plan and measures to protect Thompson Steelhead**. Brigid noted that measures are undertaken to ensure that 80% of the Interior Fraser River steelhead (Thompson, Chilcotin stocks) can migrate through fishing areas with a high degree of certainty.

Q - How is the fishery monitored and policed?

A - There are licence conditions, contract monitors out on the water and observers on boats

Q - How many times do you actually view the actual harvest?

A - Don't have the actual numbers of harvests and nets at my fingertips right now.

Q - Could the chum fishery zone be moved?

A - Changes to regulation can take many years and is a difficult process.

Q - Could the chum opening moved another week back to November 1st?

A - Trying to find a balance of economic and environment and many other concerns. Need to work on models to play with different management plans

Q - Are survival rate studies done?

A - Yes. Can share some of those references.

Sean Bennett, Restoration Biologist, DFO in Kamloops, gave an overview of **Restoration Initiatives in Thompson Watershed**. DFO's restoration group includes an engineer, and they work with a variety of groups accessing external funding to restore degraded habitat throughout the BC Interior. Common work includes riparian area reconstruction, streambank erosion control, and encouraging natural river systems that create a variety of substrates and depths in channels for various fish habitat needs. Key message was that restoration is very expensive and takes a long time; it's better to protect existing habitat and stream functioning rather than repair it.

Q - I see quad/all-terrain vehicle tracks going through the Coldwater River. How to address this?

A - Fisheries officers have been there, it's difficult to deal with, hard to catch people. Education is the way to deal with it.

Mike Ramsay, A/Manager, Fisheries Management, MFLNRO in Williams Lake gave an overview of the **Provincial Framework for Steelhead Management in BC**. Mike advised that the provincial framework is a province-wide document for managing steelhead, and that the principles are conservation-based and based on the precautionary principle. There are three management zones: management abundance; conservation concern; extreme conservation concern. Steps of allocation are conservation, allowance for First Nations' needs, and then opportunity and allocation. If insufficient steelhead to meet all objectives, this results in closures, short openings and restrictions. The framework is still draft, a provincial angling advisory group exists, and policy and discussion papers are being reviewed.

Q - What has been the First Nations consultation process for this?

A - I will send this to you, it was done but I am not sure about the process.

Mike Simpson advised to send outstanding questions to him, and he would forward them to the right person. Contact info as follows:

Thompson Steelhead Working Group
c/o Fraser Basin Council
200A-1383 McGill Road, Kamloops, BC V2C 6K7
Phone 250-314-9660 | Email msimpson@fraserbasin.bc.ca | Contact: Mike Simpson

Chief David Walkem thanked everyone for attending.

Appendix 1 - Agenda

Thompson Steelhead Public Forum

When:	Thursday Nov 12, 2015 - 6:30PM to 9:00PM
Where:	Cooks Ferry Indian Band, Whitsemita Complex, Spence's Bridge, BC

Public Forum Objectives:

- Share information on status of Thompson Steelhead and current management initiatives underway
- Sharing stories and significance of Thompson Steelhead to various groups and users

Time	Topic
6:30PM	Welcome <i>Chief David Walkem, Cook's Ferry Indian Band</i>
6:35PM	Sharing Stories and Significance of Steelhead <i>Nlaka'pamux Elder; others in audience invited to share short stories</i>
7:00PM	Agenda, objectives, introductions, ground rules, what's been done since 2014 <i>Mike Simpson, Senior Regional Manager, Fraser Basin Council</i>
7:15PM	Update on Status, Management and Initiatives related to Thompson Steelhead (short presentations, each followed by Q&A) In-season Updates on Steelhead <i>Rob Bison, Fisheries Stock Assessment Biologist, MFLNRO*</i> Tomorrow's Government to Government meetings <i>Mike Simpson, facilitator to Thompson Steelhead Working Group</i> Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, measures to protect Thompson Steelhead <i>Brigid Payne, Resource Manager, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)</i> Restoration Initiatives in Thompson Watershed <i>Sean Bennett, Restoration Biologist, DFO</i> Provincial Framework for Steelhead Management in BC <i>Mike Ramsay, A/Manager, Fisheries Management, MFLNRO</i>
9:00PM	Adjourn

*Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

For more information:

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 c/o Fraser Basin Council
 200A-1383 McGill Road, Kamloops, BC V2C 6K7
 Phone 250-314-9660 | Email msimpson@fraserbasin.bc.ca | Contact: Mike Simpson

Appendix 2 - Attendees

Last name	First name	Organization
Bennett	Sean	DFO
Bison	Rob	MFLNRO
Boyanowsky	Ehor	Simon Fraser University
Burrows	Greg	BCFDF
Burwash	Michael	MFLNRO
Cartwright	Stu	DFO
Gilchrist	Ross	
Harrison	Bill	Steelhead Society
Hawkshaw	Mike	DFO
Hewitt	Pearl	Cook's Ferry Indian Band
Joe	Paul	Shackan Indian Band
Kikudi	Katsuji	
Kingston	Laurie	Log Cabin Pub, Baits Motel
Matthew	Pat	Secwepemc Fisheries Commission
Payne	Brigid	DFO
Peterson	Dan	MFLNRO
Peterson	Hal	Kamloops and District Fish and Game Association
Piggin	Leonard	Kamloops Fly Fishers
Poole	Erik	
Purdy	Rob	MFLNRO
Ramsay	Mike	MFLNRO
Rice	Dave	Spence's Bridge Steelhead Advocacy Association
Rice	Steve	Thompson Nicola Regional District
Ryan	Jim	Spence's Bridge Steelhead Advocacy Association
Simpson	Mike	Fraser Basin Council
Thomas	Tracy	Fraser Basin Council
Trethewey	Don	Kamloops Fly Fishers, Kamloops Fish & Game
Walkem	David	Cook's Ferry Indian Band