

Thompson Steelhead Working Group - Planning Framework Outline – Approved Nov 13, 2015

This outline of a planning framework is a structured decision making process to support the management and recovery of steelhead, to be developed by the Thompson Steelhead Working Group in 2015/16.

Other content to include and consider:

- Define the conservation unit, population status benchmarks, habitat status¹
- Identify when to engage and seek input from other first nations, stakeholders
- Geographic scope (Thompson River system; Fraser River; in-shore ocean fishing areas; off-shore)

Proposed Planning Framework (as per steps outlined in Wild Salmon Policy)
Step 1 – Identify Proposed Planning Priorities (biological, management) <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consider key management issues in the Levy Report (March 2014)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ocean survival○ Fishing mortality○ Habitat impacts – local, regional○ Water utilization▪ Consider information gaps, better tools, better monitoring▪ Identify recovery objectives for Thompson Steelhead▪ Develop a communications plan
Step 2 – Resource Management Options <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For each of the issues identified in Step 1 above:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What is currently being done?○ What are the causal factors?○ What resource management options are available to address the issue?○ Who needs to implement the options?○ Are the options tested/proven, or is this research or a pilot project?○ Alternatives to achieving recovery objectives – hatchery, habitat, or harvest?
Step 3 – Biological, Social and Economic Performance Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Define indicators for each management option, by sector
Step 4 – Assess the Likely Impacts of the Resource Management Alternatives <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For each of the management issues, and the resource management options:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How likely is the management alternative to achieve the desired effect for steelhead? When?○ Is the science proven, or is this research/pilot project/speculation or theory?○ Who needs to “buy in” or who needs to be involved in implementation? (e.g., other sectors such as agriculture, forestry, private landowners)○ What are the impacts to different fishing or conservation groups? (e.g., commercial, sports, first nations, non-profit groups)○ What plans are influenced or impacted, for which geographic scope?○ What resources are needed to implement the management alternative? Do the resources exist, or how likely is it to acquire them? (e.g., human resources, expertise, cash, equipment)○ How do they address the performance indicators from step 3?
Step 5 – Select Preferred Management Options <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Tradeoffs to consider include but are not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Resource availability○ Timelines○ Buy-in (in particular from other sectors)○ Implementation mechanism (e.g., voluntary, regulatory, or a combination)○ Need for tangible results compared to plans, process (e.g., visibility to various groups)

¹ Consider utilizing Johnston 2013 Management Reference Points for Thompson and Chilcotin late summer-run returns of steelhead stock aggregates, BC Fish & Wildlife Branch, fisheries project report RD139.

Deliverable

The proposed final product, or deliverable of the planning framework process would be an **integrated plan** that addresses recovery and management of Thompson steelhead.

It is anticipated that this integrated plan would be an evergreen, or living document; it would be updated from time to time as new information is brought forward.

Steelhead Objectives

The following high-level, long term objectives were proposed in the draft Thompson Steelhead Committee terms of reference, which were NOT approved Nov 13, 2015, with considerations noted in brackets afterwards:

- Increase Thompson steelhead population numbers (consider Wild Salmon Policy, increase to what maximum number, for what purpose, and specific numbers per tributary)
- Develop and implement a plan for the recovery and management of steelhead (this is the deliverable of the planning framework outline; connect this to other plans including but not limited to Integrated Fisheries Management Plan)
- There are sufficient steelhead for First Nations use, in the Thompson River system and downstream (best case scenario is ceremonial, sustenance and an economic fishery; minimal scenario is ceremonial fishery)
- There are sufficient steelhead for sport fishing opportunities (best case scenario is harvest opportunity; minimal scenario is catch and release; also consider timing and length of season)
- Management information gaps are identified (balance information needs with decision making; don't enter a *data death spiral* where decisions are paralyzed)
- Improve communication and transparency of information and decision making between First Nations, federal and provincial governments (build relationships, involve First Nations in recovery and management planning, recognize existing agreements (e.g., Reconciliation Framework Agreements, Integrated Fisheries Management Plans, Fraser Salmon Management Council))

In addition to the "high level" objectives above, the following more detailed objectives and considerations were generated earlier in 2014/15 at TSWG meetings. These will need to be considered and refined during the development of the planning framework:

- Identify within the planning framework more specific biological objectives for each specific watershed (Nicola, Bonaparte, Deadman, Thompson mainstem) (Long term, consider habitat...life stages...Wild Salmon Policy to be used. How to devise objectives for things that are beyond our control? Continue to refine the biological objectives for stock)
- Habitat supports steelhead populations to its full extent (consider habitat restoration as a tool)
- Ensure existence of all steelhead stock in all places of historic distribution (stock abundance; long term)
- Identify biological information gaps in habitat use, life stages, compile existing information (balance information needs with decision making; don't enter a *data death spiral* where decisions are paralyzed – short term. Johnston 2013 for technical information. Gap is conditional on what management requires)
- Identify gaps in biological information, based on management (either fishing mortality and bycatch is minimized; or steelhead numbers are sufficiently high that mortality and bycatch do not impact other management objectives)
- Impacts between DFO and their clients, First Nations, and province (in both directions) are minimized