

## Advice to Minister

**Issue: Weak and late delivery of a “wild salmon policy”**

### Background

- October 14, 1998 – Fisheries Minister Anderson announces series of major fisheries policy restructuring initiatives known as A New Direction for Canada’s Pacific Salmon Fisheries.
- March 15, 2000. DFO releases much-anticipated six principle draft wild salmon policy, and announces public consultation schedule.
- May 23 – June 29, 2000. DFO conducts 13 open houses on WSP and salmon enhancement program in BC; science staff describe WSP as a framework for managing the risks our activities pose to the conservation of wild salmon and their habitats, Canada’s commitment to fisheries code of conduct and UN convention of biological diversity, how it plans to conserve biological diversity (conservation unit and minimum and target levels of abundance, and cultivation (salmon enhancement program) and strategic intervention for conservation.
- May 12, 2000. Gathering of fisheries scientists at Simon Fraser University (SFU) review “flawed” WSP, criticize lack of clear goals, suggest major revisions in principles; ensuing media coverage accuses Ottawa of weakening policy.
- June 2, 2000 – Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (PFRCC) releases advisory on WSP and salmonid enhancement calling WSP the “most important document that DFO will produce in this decade,” and for major changes in the draft policy’s six principles.
- November 5, 2000. Dovetail Consulting releases “Final Report on Consultations for the Wild Salmon Policy Discussion Paper and the Salmonid Enhancement Program”. Dog’s breakfast of opinions from small hatchery defenders, to wild salmon zealots.
- 20 February 2002. Revised WSP circulated internally in DFO; six principles reduced to three. Not yet released publicly. At some point, DFO also assembles “teams” to develop “operational guidelines” for WSP relative to fisheries management (harvest), habitat, aquaculture and enhancement.
- November 7, 2002. Wild salmon policy work session hosted by DFO at Richmond Fisheries Dialogue Forum (federal government and First Nations). DFO deferred direct questions on whether DFO was using old

six principle or new three principle WSP; first public confirmation of working groups and operational guidelines.

- November 15, 2002. DFO WSP coordinator Stephen Wright admits to deep internal disagreement on developing operational guidelines, particularly for harvesting of sockeye (fisheries management); divisions related to staff's divergent social and biological goals, definitions of conservation units (lakes or lake complexes?).
- 2002. Sierra Club releases its own WSP.
- 2003. SARA proclaimed; Minister Thibault announces recommendations stemming from sockeye review, including pledge of WSP by end of 2003.
- 2003. SFU hired to conduct final consultation on WSP principles and operational guidelines; parallel process planned for First Nations. DFO scientists privately convey concerns about operational planning gridlock. Conservation and WSP stalls. Public restless.
- 2004. No consultations to date, and no wild salmon policy; PFRCC publicly criticizes DFO over lack of WSP. Pat Chamut now leading file on assignment to Deputy Minister. DFO admits to Marine Conservation Caucus that latest iteration of WSP is less prescriptive (no operational guidelines) than previous 3-4 versions.

### **Advice to Minister and Recommended Response**

- Confidence in DFO's willingness and ability to protect wild salmon and Public interest at all time low.
- Expectations are high that Public and wild salmon deserve effective wild salmon policy. Recommend to the Minister that prescriptive wild salmon policy, with operational guidelines, be focus of DFO efforts to complete plan, and restore public confidence.
- Recommend that DFO consult immediately with conservation sector to restore transparency in process and confidence on appropriateness of current direction of wild salmon policy.

### **Contacts**

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