



SEHAB Roundtable Template (Oct. 2014)

Our Vision: Pacific Region communities living sustainably within the natural limitations of healthy ecosystems supporting abundant and biologically diverse Pacific salmonids.

Our Mission: SEHAB C.A.R.E.S. SEHAB is the voice of the volunteer community dedicated to:

- Communicating
- Advocating
- Representing
- Educating, and
- Supporting its endeavours

SEHAB and the community have a shared commitment of ensuring functioning ecosystems supporting viable, genetically diverse and abundant indigenous fish populations.

SEHAB Member: Gordon Wadley

Area: Upper Skeena

SEP Contact: Lana Miller RRU

Date: January 2015

Key Issues:

What top three points can you distill from community input to take to DFO RHQ?

1. Who do you call in DFO on local area issues and where? Recent re-organization changes have left public in the dark as to DFO contact and presence. Closure of local offices eliminates access to Fisheries Officers and DFO in smaller communities. Little response from calls to area offices. Questions from concerned public about where DFO is and where will they be if major projects planned for NWBC go ahead in our region.

2. Why have we not heard about charges laid in response to the Mt. Polley spill? Was there no impact to fish or fish habitat?

3. Where are OUR experts from agencies (DFO, Environment Canada, MOE BC) on major project reviews ongoing in NWBC? Why do we not have representation and presentations on potential impacts to resources?

Stories:

A few examples of successes, failures, challenges.

Lake Babine sockeye returns once again offer challenges to current management regimes. A surplus of enhanced adult sockeye of up to one million was reported off the Fulton R. spawning channels in 2014. This despite Lake Babine Nation (LBN) seining fish for commercial sale outside of the river and channels. This surplus precipitated vocal concerns from commercial fishing interests (see Utube – Fulton UFAWU) who want to catch more in the mixed stock fishery on the coast. *A virtual replay of how we got in trouble over the years in the first place.*

Meanwhile DFO instead of allowing capture of surplus adult Sk by Lake Babine (LBN) through their AFS agreement, and at the fence (where the surplus can be identified and fish are higher quality), DFO currently only allows capture and sale of Jack Sk. In order for LBN to harvest surplus adults at the Babine R. fence LBN has to first purchase licences from coastal commercial fishermen before they can harvest where these fish are still of commercial value.....This cuts profit to LBN by over 60%. Go figure? Sounds like an allocation issue. Look for the next chapter in the coming year.

Toboggan Creek Enhancement Society (TCES) - For a number of years TCES has been monitoring fish migration through the HWY 16 culvert on Toboggan creek and documenting damage to fish and access problems for Coho and Pink Salmon. TCES has lobbied the Ministry of Highways (MOH) for sometime to upgrade the crossing or provide better access for fish to the culvert for upstream migration. MOH has proposed works to build a new plunge pool and downstream structure to address this issue. Works are proposed to be carried out during winter low flows.

TCES has gained a new Project Authority while continuing to work closely with the Assessment Division. Lana Miller of RRU has been designated as our new contact through SEP and attended the last director's meeting with Barry Finnegan to introduce the changes. TCES welcomes the return to SEP and looks forward to new relationships with DFO locally.

Lake Babine Nation (LBN) now gets the remaining funds from the old Fort Babine SEP. Funds are used to operate an interpretive center in Fort Babine on weekends through the summer. Funds are also allocated for training Streamkeepers in the Lake Babine communities to assist in their AFS program. Up to 20 staff have received Streamkeepers training, stream assessment training and work experience in improving fish passage during adult migrations.

Low water during late summer fall in tributaries to Babine Lake and increase beaver activity are holding up sockeye migrations to spawning creeks. LBN is focussed on the health of wild Babine sockeye stocks and has prepared applications to various groups to hopefully assist in a recovery plan for affected systems through habitat restoration. RRU is supporting.

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Issues Specific to SEHAB's Work Plan:

SEHAB Work Plan	Local Issue, Specific Examples	Actions by Community or DFO	SEHAB Opportunity
Wild Salmon Policy (Stock Assessment, Habitat)	The Chicago Creek Enhancement Society met with CNR to discuss issues around beaver dam removal, timing and notification issues and improved coordination with local stewards		To encourage coordination with CNR and other local stewardship groups to avoid impacts to water quality, habitat and local projects through better communication.
Aquaculture			
Capacity & Core Funding	<p>Toboggan Creek SEP was provided \$ from PSF to complete installation of a new water intake for the hatchery</p> <p>Lake Babine Nation (LBN) has taken over the past funding for the old FT Babine CEDP. Funding levels have been substantially reduced by about 50%</p>	<p>Support from RRU in design and installation was major contribution to success of the project</p> <p>currently building capacity in streamkeepers and operation of an interpretive center at FT Babine. LBN is focussed on health of wild Babine Sk stocks</p>	Re-establish relationship with LBN and provide information and support to initiatives

Submissions and Comments from Groups:

Comeau Creek group reports some success with habitat structures to capture gravels and plans more in the coming year. They have expressed interest in a small 10K egg Coho hatchery, should that be feasible, and currently operate an incubation tank to familiarize the group with incubation requirements

Comeau Creek Group[- The group at Skeena Meadows has been monitoring of coho returns on Chicago and Comeau Creeks. These works are carried out in conjunction with the local CA Brenda Donas. Coho returns for Comeau Creek were up substantially from last year with about 200 Coho counted.

Toboggan Creek Enhancement Society – Largest Coho return on record for the past 30 years with over 7300 returning adults. Of the Coho examined through the counting fence 76% were wild and 24% CWT marks and 883 Coho had been previously tagged through

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the Moricetown Canyon study, representing 13% of the Toboggan stock. Average size was larger as well with more 4 year old fish returning.

Chinook broodstock collection was completed but returns were very low on Upper Bulkley (100 – 120 adult Ck) Toboggan is applying to increase production of this dwindling stock and to assess possible straying to mainstem Bulkley due to low flow conditions and lack of access.

Chicago Creek Enhancement Society (CCES) – CCES Is in the process of applying for PSF funding to repair and add to instream habitat components for gravel catchment in lower Station Creek. Area was heavily spawned this past fall by Pink and about 1900 Coho and there is limited spawning area and gravels below the culvert obstruction upstream. RRU is providing support. Crews were kept busy at the fence with 10x the expected returns.

Chicago Creek Enhancement Society – Coho returns to Station Creek were about 10 times predicted levels with 1900 adult Coho returning through the fence. Volunteers were kept busy dealing with the increased numbers of fish through the new fence installation. Society and CNR have met to develop a new strategy to coordinate beaver dam releases and moderate impacts to stream flows, water quality and society facilities.

General comments from groups and individuals – low stream levels approaching lowest in local memory, high water temperatures. Moderate return of Pinks to local stream for an even year, Chinook returns generally poor with spawning occurring about ten days to two weeks later than normal – possibly due to flows and temperatures. **Chum returns almost non-existent again.** Sockeye good to Babine lake but relatively poor to other Upper Skeena tribs. Coho returns were off the charts.

A mild winter and little snow prior to Christmas has raised concerns about snowpack and potential low water in rivers again this year.

Our partner, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)

DFO Vision: To advance sustainable aquatic ecosystems and support safe and secure Canadian waters while fostering economic prosperity across maritime sectors and fisheries.

DFO Mission: Through sound science, forward-looking policy, and operational and service excellence, Fisheries and Oceans Canada employees work collaboratively toward the following **three strategic outcomes**:

- **Economically Prosperous Maritime Sectors and Fisheries;**
- **Sustainable Aquatic Ecosystems;**
- **Safe and Secure Waters.**

In working toward these outcomes, the Department will be guided by the principles of sound scientific knowledge and effective management.

Salmonid Enhancement Program: The Salmonid Enhancement Program (SEP) plays a key role in conserving and managing Pacific salmon stocks. The program aims to rebuild vulnerable salmon stocks, provide harvest opportunities, work with First Nations and coastal communities in economic development, and improve fish habitat to sustain salmon populations. SEP broke new ground when it was launched in 1977 by working closely with citizens and schools to raise awareness of salmon conservation and to carry out hands-on community salmon enhancement and stewardship projects. Three of the program's main activities are: Hatcheries, Resource Restoration, Stewardship and Education.