

November 6, 7, 8 2023

Upper Skeena

POCO/Mission Creek

SEHAB Member: Kris Bulloch

Community Advisor: None at the Moment

Key Issues:

- 1.** Operational funding continues to be a large problem for many groups.
- 2.** The drought had a large impact on many stocks. Low water levels & high water temps created some very volatile conditions for returning fish this year. Especially the returning Chinook in the Upper Bulkley River & the Sockeye in the Babine waiting to pass through the weir.
- 3.** Fish Passage was a large concern this year as well. Mostly again because of the drought. Due to the low water levels the beavers have built an excessive amount of dams, which a vast majority of them were impassable

Positives

- 1.** Largely above average Pink & Coho salmon return into the Upper Skeena Watershed
- 2.** Good support from DFO staff at a local level

Highlights from area groups

Buck Creek Hatchery & Nature Centre (A Rocha Canada's Houston project)

Any issues that are affecting your group and/or your projects that are directly related to DFO?

- We would like to see more stock assessment for the Upper Bulkley River
 - Assess impacts of hatchery conservation efforts: Toboggan Creek Hatchery with chinook and Buck Creek Hatchery with coho
 - Wet'suwet'en fisheries has expressed interest to work with us on Upper Bulkley sockeye and chinook recovery efforts

- Explore a fish fence project that incorporates an AI camera to photograph and count fish, as we are limited in personnel to manage a fence trap full time

Any positive things that are directly related to DFO?

- Our local DFO staff were quick to share PSF's Emergency Drought Response Fund and brainstorm with us about what we could apply for. We successfully obtained funding support to have boots on the ground to assist coho spawners through the 15+ impassable beaver dams on the Upper Bulkley River this fall. We helped at least 300 coho spread out through the river and reach valuable spawning habitat
- Special shout out to Tasheena England who took on extra workload this summer/fall while our Community Advisor role is in transition. She did an amazing job helping us while also managing Stream to Sea

A general update of how & what has been happening with your group that you would like to share?

- The Buck Creek Hatchery had a very successful coho broodstock season, with 10,400 coho eggs now incubating at the hatchery and 200 more in local school classrooms

Bulkley Valley Rod & Gun Club

I would like to thank dfo officers and others staff for helping to keep chicken creek beaver dams open for fish passage.

Lake Babine Nation

-Nation released a notice about fishing closures below the Babine fish counting weir due to high water temps. It is mainly a catch and release fly fishing only fishery map there was concern around high catch and release mortality.

Toboggan Creek Hatchery

-Did not have any issues from the drought because we are glacier fed so the heat actually raised the level of our creek and the water temps stayed low

-The Upper Bulkley Chinook didn't fare too well with the drought. The Upper Bulkley was 18 to 23.5 Degrees in July, the water level and DO's were very low

and there were impassable beaver dams low in the systems. We actioned and went early to capture, transport & hold them until spawning time.

-Mid July we had a rain event that flushed the system and we had all of our holding Chinook die within a week's time. We found out that CN had herbicide sprayed the tracks and the mortality reports, toxicology and symptoms were conducive to herbicide poisoning but that is not the proven cause of death.

-We had a very large Coho return through our fence. We handled. Approx 6850 Coho through our fence (our average return handled through the fence is approx 2700)