

**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 Roundtable Report — September 2016**

**SEHAB Member: Lee Hesketh**

**Area: Southern Interior**

**Community Advisor: Tom Niven acting for Fred Lockwood**

**Date: Sept 25 2016**

**Key Issues:**

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

1. People are asking what has happened to our fish stocks given the dramatic down turn of returning salmon numbers. Stronger communications to the general public by Fisheries and Oceans Canada helps maintain awareness of Salmon and builds trust that SEP is meeting the obligation of protecting wild salmon. This should also include the good news stories as well. In turn this helps stewardship organizations maintain their relevance in the public eye.

2. Given the concern over low numbers of returning fish, there is concern that the lack of capacity within Fisheries and Oceans Canada in staffing and working budgets will limit opportunities to engage and support public efforts to restore and enhance fish stocks. This includes technical support to mitigate problems around habitat damage or disasters to supporting processes involving fish passage and reservoir storage. Different process's are occurring in the southern interior where Provincial agencies are looking at climate change impacts including drought and opportunities for adaptation. For example, Is DFO taking steps to fully engage these process's so that say changes to the Provincial Water Act fully meet conservation needs for salmon.

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3. **Activities with local stewardship groups has dropped off for a number of reasons. A big part of that is the lack of available funding to cover costs of developing and constructing restoration projects. 50 cent dollars through programs like the Recreational Fisheries Program are only helpful if you have matching funding up front which limits a lot of our smaller rural organizations from participating. That said a lot of work is being done due to partnerships being developed by individuals doing what needs to be done. Individuals from our regional DFO habitat restoration unit and CA staff have been making it work through strong personal commitments to the fisheries resource which is appreciated by the stewardship committee.**

## **Stories:**

### **A few examples of successes, failures, challenges.**

**Success:** Kingfisher Interpretive Center had their AGM celebrating their complete recovery after a major torrent event damaged the facility in spring 2014. Thanks to incredible community support, efforts from DFO staff, and NGO financial support the facility is better than ever and back providing tours, raising fish and educating the general public.

Wilsey Dam Fish Passage Committee has provided a matrix around fish passage to the BC Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Board for support. This is stage 5 in BC Hydro's 7 stage process in determining if BC Hydro will consider fish passage. The project has strong first nations and local community support. This is a good news story that has been waiting for 88 years to be completed. The challenge will be steps 6 and 7.

The Secwepemc Fisheries Commission Habitat Restoration Program has successfully partnered with Bands throughout their Shuswap territory, DFO, NGO's, contractors and landowners in completing a broad cross section of habitat restoration projects. Works are currently in progress throughout the region which is a great example of cooperation and effective use of resources. Regional DFO Habitat Restoration staff support has been key in successfully obtaining permitting on projects allowing for solutions being found to numerous situations impacting fisheries values.

The stewardship community, resource management staff from the provincial government, politicians and first nations stepped forward lead by DFO staff from Kamloops in helping the Chinook salmon enter the Salmon River from Shuswap Lake. DFO recognized the issue with the entrance of the river not being accessible and put out the call for help to mitigate the problem. While the low water levels and low numbers of fish still pose a challenge, the cooperation and effort of several dozen people still helped make a difference to what we do have.

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**Challenges:**

Permitting has been a challenge in past but efforts have been made by DFO, and MFLNR staff in finding ways to make the new section 11 system work. While we have had to complete more detailed remediation plans which increase development cost for projects, we have received permitting.

One of the recent challenges to habitat on interior rivers is the emergence of jet boats. While used for years on most system by fisheries staff, the sudden use of jet boats by recreationalist are placing many riverbank at risk from wash damage. While they are recognized as a useful watercraft allowing access to hard to reach places, the unethical use of jet boats is having consequences on fish habitat. I have also heard off jet boats being used to disturb salmon from holding pools restricted to fishermen. The North Okanagan Regional District as part of their watershed planning for the Shuswap River have proposed restrictions on sections of the river. While heavily supported by the local environmental community it has also received as much opposition from the summer recreational sector. It is being put out for another public consultation process to allow for a mandate be set whether efforts go forward to have Transport Canada look at changes to current water craft regulations.

**Issues Specific to SEHAB's Work Plan:**

<b>SEHAB Work Plan</b>	<b>Local Issue, Specific Examples</b>	<b>Actions by Community or DFO</b>	<b>SEHAB Opportunity</b>
<b>Wild Salmon Policy (Stock Assessment, Habitat)</b>	<b>Lack of enforcement of the wild salmon policy.</b>	<b>Enforcement staff have been active with no negative reports.</b>	<b>Solicit gov to provide adequate resources to conservation and protection to enforce what laws are already there and strengthen the wild salmon policy to protect habitat.</b>
<b>Aquaculture</b>	<b>Previous history in the area has made communication between hatcheries non-existent causing a lack of overarching plan and fragmented activity.</b>	<b>Attempts at communication and collaboration by volunteer groups.</b>	<b>Need to create dialogue if we are looking at supporting limited fisheries stocks to determine achievable goals.</b>
<b>Capacity &amp; Core Funding</b>	<b>No human or financial resources for overarching supervision and plan in the watershed.</b>  <b>Volunteers working on a shoe string budget spending lots of human resources on trying to find funding for projects and then still not being able to pay staff or operational expenses.</b>	<b>Looking for pockets of funding to cover core operations</b>	<b>Solicit gov to maintain and enhance CA positions and capabilities especially with as current CA is temporary for the southern interior</b>

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**Submissions, Comments from Groups:** When wearing the SEHAB hat , I conduct my duties wearing other hats representing other organizations all promoting environmental sustainability. I sit with the Fraser Basin Council as a director and the Okanagan Water Board Stewardship Committee as a representative for the Agriculture sector. I also manage the Farmland Riparian Interface Stewardship Program that works throughout the interior promoting cooperation around resource management. This allows me to connect with a lot of individuals in the stewardship field.

This time around I didn't receive written correspondence back but I had opportunity to receive verbal comments. Most were the same concerns around lack of funding, lack of returning fish, and dwindling or aging volunteer core.

The only comment I received outside the norm was from a Adams Lake Indian Band member mentioning that DFO was missing opportunities to enhance Sockeye numbers by opening up presently inaccessible areas in the upper Adams Lake watershed.