

## **FISH FRUSTRATION The next time you eat salmon, think twice**

From *The Globe and Mail*

Mon 02 Jul 2007

MARK HUME VANCOUVER

Think salmon.

If Paul Kariya has his way, that phrase will be heard a lot in British Columbia over the next few years. He believes that if he can get enough people thinking salmon, the next step - saving salmon - will be a lot easier.

"The sad fact is people are going to have to save salmon. Things have got to the point where salmon can't save themselves," says Dr. Kariya, executive director of the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

And he's going to need all the help he can get because the PSF, a non-profit organization known for its work in restoring small streams across the province, has decided to take on a much bigger challenge. Starting this year the organization's main focus is the Fraser, the largest river in British Columbia, running more than 1,300 kilometres from the Rocky Mountains to Vancouver's doorstep.

The Fraser was selected, he says, after Rick Hansen, who is chair of the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society, a main backer of the PSF, asked if it wouldn't make sense to put more effort into Canada's most important salmon river.

"The concern was that there are so many systems in B.C. that need work that we will never get ahead of the curve [working just on small streams]. So the question was asked: What about the Fraser? It still is a big, intact system. It's the largest salmon producer in the world. And it's right here. So we thought, why not? Let's do it."

Dr. Kariya says the PSF's experience on all those smaller watersheds will prove invaluable in tackling the giant Fraser.

"After all, the Fraser is no more than a collection of little streams," he says.

The PSF and the Fraser Basin Council, which are jointly managing the Fraser Basin initiative, will announce the first spending this week: some \$970,000 this year on 28 projects from Langley to Quesnel. The multi-year initiative has \$25-million in initial funding from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the B.C. Living Rivers Trust Fund and the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society.

The PSF is just starting to approach other potential donors in the private sector and is hoping soon to add substantially to its funding base.

An educational focus - which is where the "Think salmon" phrase comes in - will be a big part of the project, says Chad Brealey, director of development for the PSF.

He says one of the objectives is to elevate the importance of salmon in the public mind, so that it becomes an icon of environmental health.

"We have the greatest salmon river on the planet in our backyard, but we forget it," says Mr. Brealey. "We want to get people thinking about salmon more, and how fortunate we are to have salmon."

The PSF is one of B.C.'s most important conservation organizations and it's hard to think of a better place to put your money if you want to do something for salmon. It has been fighting for salmon on the West Coast for 20 years. During those two decades the main focus has always been on restoring small watersheds, or as the foundation's motto puts it: "Bringing them back, stream by stream."

Relying heavily on local volunteer groups, the PSF has spent more than \$5-million since 1987 to support 674 community projects. Nobody knows how many salmon have resulted from these efforts, which have leveraged some \$30-million additional dollars, but it's probably tens of millions of fish. There is hardly a stream, at least in southern B.C., that hasn't been touched by the PSF's 30,000 volunteers over the years. This massive, gumboot-clad work force has rebuilt spawning beds, replanted river banks with trees, incubated salmon eggs in small hatcheries, lobbied governments to protect habitat, and shamed, cajoled and begged support from industry.

We can expect that same kind of tenacious, hands-on, community- embracing effort on the Fraser project.

Dr. Kariya says the PSF has a "master plan" for the Fraser, stretching from the estuary to the headwaters, and will roll it out over the next few years, tributary by tributary.

It's his hope that soon people won't be able to think of the Fraser without thinking salmon.

[mhume@globeandmail.com](mailto:mhume@globeandmail.com)

© 2007 CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.