

Highlights from the first 4 years

Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada



BUILDING COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP OF WATERSHEDS

Living Rivers was established by the government of British Columbia to create a legacy for the province based on healthy watersheds, sustainable ecosystems and thriving communities. The Living Rivers Advisory Group has used the \$21 million fund to support innovative programs in the Fraser Basin, in the Georgia Basin and Vancouver Island and in the Skeena River watershed. Recognizing the need to change how people work together, these Living Rivers programs address the health and sustainability of water by fostering collaboration and an attitude of stewardship within communities.

Our natural capital, particularly access to enough clean water, is fundamental to both the health and economic prosperity of British Columbians. Every sector of the economy, every aspect of life is linked to the precious resource of water and its natural flow through the provincial watersheds. As with human health, keeping our ecosystems healthy is far more economical than curing them or, worse, losing them altogether.

British Columbia watersheds face critical challenges brought about by climate change and development pressure, including rising water

temperatures, water shortages and declining salmon stocks. Government plans such as Living Water Smart and the Climate Adaptation Strategy set the direction for addressing these challenges. However, government alone cannot implement these plans with its traditional tools of regulation and enforcement. First, this approach is prohibitively expensive, especially in these tough economic times. Second, the centralized approach is not suited to the complexity and uncertainty of the situation.

The Living Rivers approach can provide leaner plan implementation that integrates policy with community concerns and local knowledge. With this approach, government

Achievements

FSWP vigorously encourages collaboration and the formation of new partnerships, recognizing this is the key to improving community engagement and capacity. The 2009 annual meeting of our stakeholder network, for example, was themed "Opportunities for Collaboration" and featured sessions on partnerships and leveraging, regional planning groups, how to work with municipalities and bridging cultures between First Nations and others. FSWP also provides tools to facilitate collaboration, such as The Aquatic Partnership (TAP) an online, interactive workspace.

Here are some highlights of FSWP bringing diverse user groups into collaborative partnerships to achieve a variety of results:

- better coordination of information,
- more effective water resources management,
- conflict prevention and resolution,
- better working relationships across sectors and
- behaviour change for the benefit of watersheds.

As groups share their experience with each other, the participation accelerates. FSWP projects have gained significant momentum and promise to continue to deliver both direct results and increasing capacity for communities to respond to emerging challenges related to water and climate change.

INTERTRIBAL TREATY ORGANIZATION



"The Fraser River salmon can be sustained by building new bridges with and among First Nations. The unique approach of FSWP to foster collaboration has been key in getting our Intertribal Treaty Organization started in its work to convene Indigenous Nations in saving the wild salmon fisheries."

– Grand Chief Saul Terry, CEO, Intertribal Treaty Organization

Enable communities to steward resources

Responding to the complex issues related to water, watersheds and climate change requires many disciplines and competencies. FSWP has the flexibility to work with – and foster collaboration among – many kinds of groups and forms of participation, including volunteers, government agencies, scientists.

Over 50 FSWP projects have focused on the process of convening stakeholders to define and support improved decision making practices. These process-oriented forums are complemented by

NICOLA WATERSHED COMMUNITY ROUND TABLE

The Nicola Watershed Community Round Table is a proactive forum of diverse interests seeking equitable use of water and solutions to long-standing issues. Key outputs of this forum include:

- Nicola Water Use Management Plan, now submitted to the province for adoption
- supporting studies of: present and future water demand • water budget storage sites • groundwater and surface water interaction

When the 2009 drought in this region called for extreme action, the government tapped the relationships of this trusted community group. The situation highlighted a regional need that the forum is well positioned to address as its current project:

- operational plan for drought response



"The Nicola watershed is experiencing water challenges that will likely become more acute in the future. The Nicola Watershed Community Round Table and Nicola Water Use Management Planning Team are to be commended for the work they have done so far in trying to proactively address some of these challenges."

– Barry Penner, Minister of the Environment, from a letter to the chair of the Nicola forum

is a partner that sets priorities and provides basic funds for communities to strategize about those priorities. This engages communities to apply the priorities in their local context and to participate in whatever ways make sense, including co-funding and outreach to other partners.

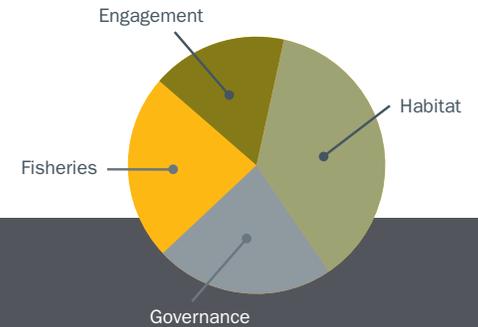
In 2006, Living Rivers funded a plan for the Fraser Basin, co-managed by Pacific Salmon Foundation and Fraser Basin Council, to inspire changes in human behaviour for the benefit of salmon and watersheds. The \$10 million from Living Rivers motivated Fisheries and Oceans Canada to contribute an additional \$5 million in cash and \$5 million in

services, and the Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program (FSWP) was launched. In its four years of operation plus the year currently underway, FSWP has distributed \$12.2 million to over 275 projects. Based on data for 2007 through 2009, every project dollar from Living Rivers has been matched by \$3.30 from the federal contribution together with other sources estimated by project leaders.

Equally important but not as easily quantified, FSWP projects have facilitated new relationships and capacity among the watershed stakeholders throughout the basin. This provincial-federal partnership takes a unique approach of enabling communities to

identify and address the issues for their water and watersheds. The approach has been a powerful catalyst for money and participation throughout the Fraser Basin, delivering projects with less bureaucracy and expense than would otherwise be possible.

PROJECT FUNDS FROM FSWP 2006 – 2010
TOTAL: \$12.2 MILLION



other activity such as habitat restoration and efforts to promote behaviour change. About 2/3 of FSWP projects deliver activity to directly improve habitat, water or public engagement. When a community hosts a mix of these activities to improve watershed health, it strengthens their ability to be resilient and to strategically respond to changing conditions.

In the Nicola-Thompson region, for example, FSWP projects have included watershed forums and riparian stewardship by cattlemen, as well as research on groundwater and an assessment of pine beetle effects.

Engage First Nations FSWP has helped First Nations in the Fraser Basin to link their aspirations to government in a new way. The key results are new collaborations and increased capacity for participation in the management of water and fisheries. First Nations have led numerous FSWP projects.

FARMLAND RIPARIAN INTERFACE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (FRISP)

Through FRISP, the BC Cattleman's Association offers services to the agricultural community from their peers about how and why to improve the ecological value of riparian land. While funded by FSWP, this program has provided:

- direct involvement with over 300 agricultural land owners or managers
- information assistance to improve hundreds of kilometers of riparian corridor
- mediation and workable remediation strategies to resolve conflicts between land owners and resource agencies

SALMON TABLE

The Salmon Table forum provides First Nations, commercial and sport fishers and conservation organizations a better understanding of each others' perspective. This forum has helped to promote collaborations that aim to improve relations in the fishery, including:

- construction of a trail for sports fishers to access fishing on First Nations' land
- solutions to local conflicts among Aboriginal and sport fishers near Chilliwack, resulting in a joint effort to promote peaceful interactions
- "River to Plate" strategic planning among First Nations fishers, the fish processing industry, and regulators to develop sustainable Fraser salmon fisheries



"We turned to FRISP to help with our vision of restoring a stream that flows through private agricultural land. Lee and Mike came to our first community meeting and converted a room full of cautious farmers and ranchers to the view that our long term viability is tied to the health of our

river and that restoration would not break our bank accounts. Since then, their advice and help have been instrumental in our success and in expanding our vision. We hope that consumers will recognize Nechako Valley as an agricultural community that practices water stewardship and has the health of the watershed in their operating plans."

– Wayne Salewski, Chair, Murray Creek Stream Restoration Project, Vanderhoof BC



"Tensions were very high after I got shot. The relationships built with the assistance of the Salmon Table have prevented an escalated conflict and are helping our different fisheries to find ways to get along on the river."

– Chief Willie Charlie of the Chehalis Indian Band, who was shot in the face with a pellet gun during an altercation with sports fishers in August 2009

Generate and share critical information Effective collaboration requires issue-specific information. Where knowledge gaps are most critical, FSWP supports research and facilitates its link to the appropriate users.

COUNT ON SALMON

Fisheries decisions, which must respect the federal Wild Salmon Policy and other considerations, rely on forecasts that use information about the number and species of salmon at key points in their migration. The quality of the information, however, suffers from long standing data problems, coupled with uncertainty from new conditions resulting from climate change.

The Count on Salmon project tests the feasibility of several data collection methods and revisions to the models used in forecasts. The project has improved information quality because it has helped to:

- verify viability of methods to count in-season sockeye
- observe differences between off shore and near shore fish migration
- recognize loss of fish when water temperatures are high
- engage numerous First Nations in the research

The current phase of Count on Salmon

- began with a workshop to update all interests on the design, progress and application of the project, and identify further collaboration opportunities
- builds on the results of previous years
- addresses the next most critical information gap for the project goals



"The declining trends in marine productivity of Fraser River sockeye have heightened public concerns about the long term viability of these populations. One of the most significant challenges to this viability is how the warming of the Fraser River hinders salmon as they try to migrate to their spawning grounds. The Count on Salmon project fills in critical knowledge gaps for understanding this problem."

– Mike Lapointe, Chief Biologist for Pacific Salmon Commission

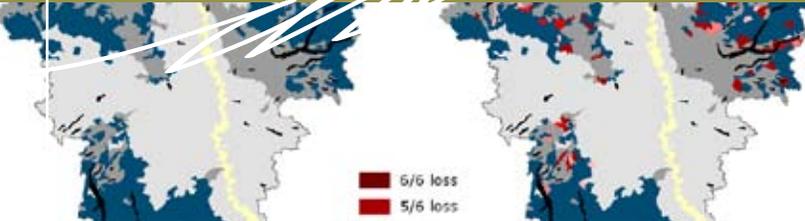
CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY AND ADAPTATION

Expected impacts of climate change include changes in air temperature and precipitation. The Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation project advanced our understanding of how the expected future climate conditions can be translated to the watershed scale by estimating impacts on water temperatures and flow conditions. These predictions were then used to evaluate the vulnerability of Pacific salmon and bull trout to climate change and identify adaptive human actions that could be taken.

The project has generated and distributed information about:

- species-specific vulnerabilities
- methods of vulnerability assessment
- adaptation opportunities, such as reducing stressors or restoring habitats
- GIS data illustrating modeled habitat and climate change effects

The project also provided outreach to regional, provincial, federal resource managers and other information users.



"The Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation project fills a key information gap that is not being addressed elsewhere. Many of us are eager to have this information to assist in regional planning as we endeavour to maintain environmental and social objectives in a changing landscape."

– A. Robin Hoffos, R.P. Bio, Section Head, Planning, Integrated Land Management Bureau, Ministry of Forests and Range

Keep the momentum

FSWP has delivered a variety of results that demonstrate the enormous potential for the Living Rivers approach of building community stewardship and collaboration to:

- attract co-funding and participation from diverse sources, from the federal government to local volunteers,
- develop community capacity to respond strategically to new challenges and
- implement government plans with reduced expense and bureaucracy.

In its initial five years, FSWP has worked to define and operate the Living Rivers approach throughout the Fraser Basin. The full value of the approach is still to be realized. Over time, as more relationships are established and experience is gained and shared, the stewardship sector strengthens and becomes more efficient.

Government faces an unprecedented set of challenges from the economy and from the uncertain and complex impacts of climate change and development pressure. British Columbia's natural capital must be maintained in the face of these challenges if we are to have a vibrant economy. The Living Rivers legacy can be government innovation and community partnerships in support of our watersheds.

What YOU can do

The Living Rivers approach relies on government to define policy and be a catalyst funder. The initial provincial funding of Living Rivers, which FSWP and others distribute, will expire in 2011. The Living Rivers group has begun to work towards a stable provincial-federal funding mechanism. **Please help us:**

- For the short term, continue the momentum by renewing Living Rivers funding while the new mechanism is developed.
- For the long term, support the creation of this new mechanism that will provide stable funding for Living Rivers to enact water and marine stewardship.

The Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program is jointly managed by Pacific Salmon Foundation and Fraser Basin Council to strategically deliver funds from the provincial Living Rivers Trust Fund and a federal initiative of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The joint managers of FSWP are impartial and ideally placed to convene a variety of perspectives, including both on-the-ground groups and larger institutions, to address complex challenges.



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