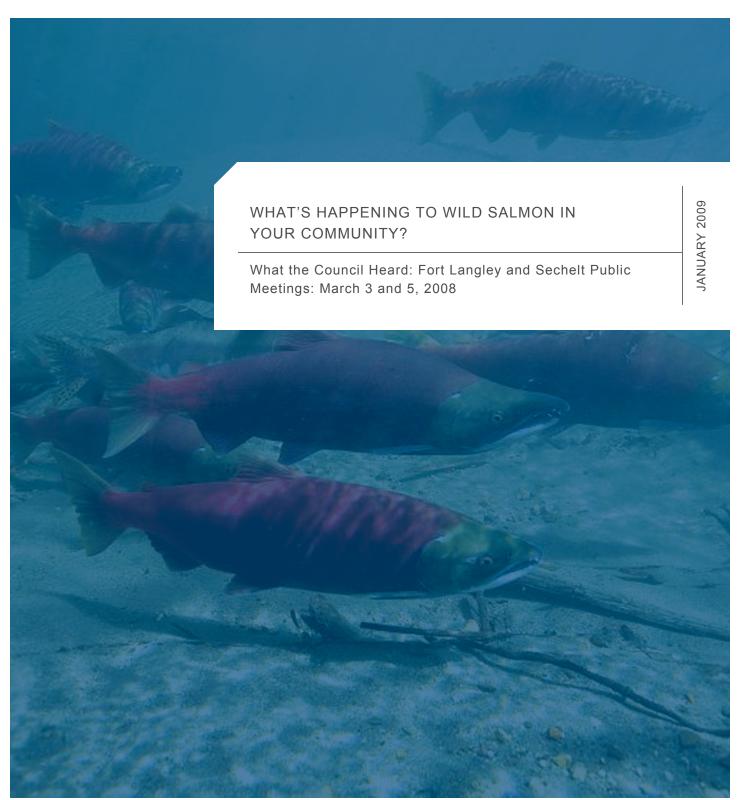


PACIFIC FISHERIES RESOURCE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Conseil pour la conservation des ressources halieutiques du pacifique



PREPARED FOR
Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council
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WHAT'S HAPPENING TO WILD SALMON IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

WHAT THE COUNCIL HEARD: FORT LANGLEY AND SECHELT PUBLIC

MEETINGS: MARCH 3 AND 5, 2008

Prepared for Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council by Dawn Steele

JANUARY 2009

What's Happening to Wild Salmon in Your Community? What the Council Heard: Fort Langley and Sechelt Public Meetings: March 3 and 5, 2008

Dawn Steele

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1. THE PFRCC'S APPROACH TO DISCUSSING 'WHAT'S HAPPENING TO WILD SALMON IN YOUR COMMUNITY?'

1.1 BACKGROUND

Since its inception, the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (PFRCC) has sought to hear from communities, First Nations, commercial and recreational fishing interests, stewards and other interested groups and individuals around British Columbia on the state of wild Pacific salmon and their habitat. Communities of place and interest have a wealth of knowledge, with local and regional perspectives that are critical to understanding and managing issues relating to wild salmon. Council members have recognized the value of such dialogues. The knowledge thus derived is invaluable in helping the PFRCC to develop strategic work plans that address issues of interest and concern for BC's wild salmon stocks, and reports that advise the federal and provincial Fisheries Ministers and the public on the state of wild Pacific salmon stocks and habitat.

1.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INPUT

The Fort Langley and Sechelt public meetings in March 2008 were part of an ongoing series of tours and meetings that PFRCC has been holding around the Province to share information with communities and to receive their knowledge and views on the state of wild Pacific salmon and their habitat. The current series began with a tour of Vancouver Island during March 2006, with public meetings in Port Hardy, Campbell River, Duncan and Port Alberni. A visit to the BC Interior in October 2006 included public meetings in Penticton and Kamloops. The March 2007 North Coast tour included public meetings in Smithers, Terrace and Prince Rupert, while the October 2007 Mid and Upper Fraser tour included public meetings in Prince George, Quesnel and Williams Lake. In this latest round, the Fort Langley meeting was held on March 3, 2008, and the Sechelt meeting was held on March 5, 2008. Times and venues for the public meetings were promoted through local contacts and groups, email, posters, media advisory and press releases. PFRCC also held public meetings in Haida Gwaii/ Queen Charlotte Islands, with results to be reported separately.

The goals of PFRCC's community meetings are to:

- Share information on natural and human influences on wild salmon;
- Gather local knowledge; and
- Compile information and ideas to help PFRCC develop and provide advice to government and the public, and to help shape future Council activities.

1.3 MEETING FORMAT

Agendas for these public meetings are designed to provide a variety of opportunities for comment and discussion. The formal portion of each public meeting is preceded by an hour-long open house, with poster presentations and opportunity for informal one-on-one discussion with PFRCC members and staff.

The formal meeting begins with introductions and a very brief PFRCC presentation highlighting issues relating to wild salmon, including climate change, land and water use, and a sampling of known local salmon stock and habitat issues. Participants are then invited to comment on local issues, with a PFRCC reporter on hand to record and synthesize this feedback. Council members moderate this portion of the meeting to encourage participation and ensure a fair opportunity for any participant who wishes a chance to speak.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO WILD SALMON IN YOUR COMMUNITY? FORT LANGLEY & SECHELT MEETINGS JANUARY 2009

1. THE PFRCC'S APPROACH TO DISCUSSING 'WHAT'S HAPPENING TO WILD SALMON IN YOUR COMMUNITY?'

Participants are then invited to work in groups, using large table maps to identify areas of interest, record comments and prioritize local wild salmon issues and solutions. PFRCC council members and staff facilitate table discussions and each group is invited to briefly report back. The information recorded on the table maps is later collated and included in the final report.

Comment sheets provide further opportunity to address the following four key questions and to add further remarks:

- 1. How are wild salmon stocks doing in your area relative to other parts of BC?
- 2. How are changes in the marine and freshwater environments affecting salmon stocks in your area?
- 3. What changes are needed to make positive improvements to freshwater environments to help sustain salmon?
- 4. What is the major salmon management challenge in your area?

Finally, participants who are not comfortable speaking publicly are also invited to provide additional comments directly to the Council recorder, to Council members and staff present, and/or to provide written or e-mail submissions to address issues and concerns not covered in the public meetings.

Council members have found these discussions to be candid and valuable. This report provides a summary of the feedback captured at the Fort Langley and Sechelt meetings, highlighting many of the important ideas and themes that were heard.

2. SYNOPSIS OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

The following summarizes participation and feedback from the community meetings in Fort Langley and Sechelt.

2.1 PARTICIPATION

Fort Langley, March 3, 2008: 60 participants Sechelt, March 5, 2008: 68 participants

The two meetings drew interest and participation from a variety of groups and individuals (Table 1). Relative to public meetings elsewhere, however, there was higher representation of citizens, stewards and local groups concerned with conservation than user groups. Commercial fishermen and First Nations in particular were less well represented than in many previous community meetings, and many individuals did not record an affiliation on the sign-in sheet or evaluation forms.

TABLE 1. Identified affiliation (%) of community participants in the Fort Langley and Sechelt meetings. Some did not record affiliation; others reported multiple affiliations.

Affiliation	Fort Langley	Sechelt
	/6	/0
Salmon stewardship	15%	4%
Hatchery	10%	7%
First Nation	2%	1%
Sport fishing	23%	7%
Commercial fishing	3%	3%
Environmental group	3%	1%
Community group	12%	10%
Prov /Fed government	2%	2%
Local government	3%	
Business/industry	1%	
Elected / political officials	1%	3%
Public	7%	3%
Media		4%
Other—Education	3%	1%

2.3 EVALUATION OF THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS

In addition to completing comment forms, all participants were strongly encouraged to complete an evaluation form. A total of 30 evaluation forms were submitted for the Fort Langley meeting, along with 19 for Sechelt. Most participants rated both meetings as Very Good overall and almost all reported that the agenda and purpose of the meeting were clear. Aspects of the meetings that received the highest satisfaction ratings in both communities were the discussions (plenary and/or the roundtable mapping exercises) and the opportunity to share local knowledge and concerns (Satisfactory to Excellent in most cases). Additional comments were overwhelmingly positive, with the most frequent comments being that the meetings were informative, organized, stimulating and well-balanced. A few described the meetings as challenging, repetitive or too short.

In terms of who else should have been present, the most common reply was that government decision makers and political leaders needed to be present at such meetings to hear the concerns directly if any progress was to be made. Several Sechelt participants also suggested that more youth need to be part of such discussions, and there were also several comments stressing the importance of engaging industry in such meetings.

3. WHAT THE COUNCIL HEARD

3.1 PRIORITY ISSUES FOR COMMUNITIES

Comments from communities on local salmon stocks and habitats were presented to Council via the open discussions, via comment forms given out during registration, via the mapping exercise and via further comments submitted in writing and/or directly to the Council recorder. These comments are summarized below with the information on the maps separately presented in the tables and maps listed in Appendix 1.

In both communities, the area of highest priority was clearly the need for more effective protection of freshwater habitat, particularly of smaller streams, to support and restore local wild salmon stocks. Participants expressed concern about many habitat-protection issues, such as impacts from urban development, forestry, dredging and gravel removal, independent hydro power projects and agriculture, along with overall water management. There was broad concern that existing legislation, policies and resources were not strong enough to protect local wild salmon stocks, along with the habitat and freshwater flows vital to their survival, in the face of competing pressures for urbanization and industrialization in a context of rapid economic development. Many individuals also felt that existing laws were not being properly enforced by all levels of government. It was suggested that moving ahead with implementing the Wild Salmon Policy would help address many concerns.

The Council also heard concern about local changes seen as connected to broader climate or ecosystem changes underway and about the need for management approaches that encompass a broader view of ecosystems and cumulative impacts, both in the marine and freshwater environments. Many participants expressed concern about a lack of leadership and eroding resources in the face of these challenges to address local stock declines. Some stressed the importance of individuals and communities coming together to do what they could locally to halt or reverse declines, for example, by working through local land-use planning processes and encouraging citizen and youth engagement to support education and greater public awareness of how wild salmon and people can coexist.

The Council heard the following comments during community meetings.

FORT LANGLEY

Discussion focused heavily on the need for better habitat protection. Many participants spoke about a lack of political will, effective policy and legislative tools, resources and/or understanding to protect wild salmon and their habitat from the impacts of urban development, industrial activity, agriculture and other human uses. There was a broad sense of decisions being driven primarily by economic factors, with little or no understanding of the needs of wild salmon. Attendees described strong pressures in the region from landowners and developers who can make millions in windfall profits from reclassification or amendments that relax salmon habitat protection requirements.

Several participants reported the loss of many small local salmon streams to development, with a figure cited of some 250 streams lost for Surrey alone. Others discussed impacts that have degraded the quality of fish habitat and affected water quality and flows in the larger creeks and rivers, such as the Nicomekl. Some impacts were blamed on poor planning decisions. An example is inadequate planning to manage growing volumes of storm water runoff or to maintain permeability as large residential developments spread across the Lower Fraser watershed. In other cases, impacts were attributed to decisions to relax salmon habitat protection requirements. Examples included allowing developers to build right up to the stream banks on Jeffreys Brook, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) approving the destruction of a Class A stream for housing development. Another key

issue was DFO's approval of a large gravel removal project at Spring Bar in the Fraser River, particularly the loss of spawning beds for early-timed Fraser chinook and skepticism about the flood control benefits of this project.

Water management was a significant concern for many speakers, who raised a number of issues relating to water quality and water flows. These included excessive water use and runoff from cranberry and blueberry farms, pollution from industry and intentional dumping of pollutants. One speaker complained that authorities failed to respond when an incident of manure dumping was reported. There were also many comments about excessive water extraction and water flow controls, with reports of many small streams and tributaries drying out in the summer, low flows in the larger systems and a declining water table. A number of participants also expressed strong concerns about potential impacts on wild salmon from the large independent power project proposed for the Upper Pitt River.

Concerns about the adequacy of current legislation and/or failure to enforce existing legislation to protect wild salmon were raised and echoed by a number of speakers. Several were critical of the new results-based approach to habitat protection, with one describing DFO's Environmental Process Modernization Plan (EPMP) as a "huge step backwards" while another saw it as "deregulation." One speaker said the new approach relies on monitoring but DFO has not provided the necessary personnel to do that monitoring. Lack of transparency was another theme, with complaints about Langley Council making development decisions in secret, about DFO not being forthcoming in responding to requests for information about development decisions and about a consultant citing incorrect data to secure amendments to the Riparian Area Regulations for a development project.

Participants also spoke of declining returns, even in enhanced systems. There were concerns about a loss of stock assessment, particularly the de-indexing of the Salmon River, declining resources for restoration and local stewardship and a reduced field presence by DFO staff. Several speakers spoke of low returns to the Nicomekl River, despite increased hatchery production and about generally declining returns elsewhere. Meanwhile, fishing pressures and methods that some felt were inappropriate were reported as contributing to conflicts within and between user groups.

Overall, little optimism was expressed, apart from comments about the potential of better education and collaboration among community stakeholders to work for stronger awareness and protection of salmon values in the Fraser Valley. Efforts to protect habitat around the Wal-mart on Jeffreys Creek was one of the few success stories cited.

SECHELT

Here again, concerns focused heavily on management and protection of freshwater habitat for local salmon stocks. Participants spoke of generally declining returns and reliance on enhancement throughout the Sunshine Coast and Powell River areas. Sakinaw Lake sockeye, with returns down from 50,000 to single digits, was noted as the most extreme example. Much concern was expressed about potential impacts on Myrtle Creek, described by participants as the last remaining wild indicator system on that coast, due to proposed logging in that watershed.

Most comments focused on damage or potential threats to freshwater habitat from housing development, logging, hydro projects and other industry. Examples of the latter included risks from a Liquid Natural Gas plant proposed on Texada Island and toxic waste said to be still emanating from Port Mellon.

There were complaints of logging impacts across the region, with a number of specific examples cited, such as recent damage in Chapman Creek. One participant said logging turned Wilson Creek into "a flush toilet" that later saw low flows over the summer. Others complained of companies being allowed to log right to the water's edge. The lack of riparian protection for small streams under the Forest and Range Practices Act, inadequate

controls over private land logging, results-based management that prevents officials from acting until the damage is done and a failure to consider cumulative impacts were all cited as key factors. Participants said these result in a lack of protection for viable habitat that could support restoration of local salmon populations. Declining resources for stewardship and restoration were also seen as hampering efforts to support local salmon bearing systems.

Water management was another key issue. One participant noted every creek in the region had water extraction licences either approved or pending. Another urged that minimum flows be set for Chapman Creek, where side channels used by spawning salmon were drying up.

Many speakers also complained about a lack of enforcement. Examples included the reported failure to lay charges against a mining company after 11 violations were established, or against a power company that diverted 90% of the flow in Louis River/Eagle River, dewatering spawning grounds and killing salmon eggs.

Ecosystems were another key theme, with lots of discussion about possible impacts of changes in predator and prey populations observed locally, including a collapse of food fish like eulachon and herring, more abundant otters and seals, and other unusual observations like higher jellyfish counts or sea lice levels in cutthroat trout. With changing climate and ocean regimes and growing human impacts on freshwater habitat, several speakers stressed the need to implement ecosystem-based management approaches for both the marine and freshwater environments. Declines in local herring populations were a particular concern for many speakers, with calls for a moratorium on herring harvest.

A number of speakers also discussed issues related to enhancement and hatcheries. Comments covered a need to review the usefulness of maintaining the current CEDP vs. PIP funding categories, underfunding, and the need for more evaluation. There were concerns about a loss of biodiversity due to hatchery practices and a need to consider ecosystem impacts of producing large numbers of hatchery fish. Others spoke of a need to better track releases and returns, or of assessing the costs of producing hatchery fish. However, it was also stressed by some speakers that without hatcheries, there would be no fisheries.

There was some optimism, however, particularly regarding the value of local citizen activism, given recent efforts to draw public attention to concerns at Chapman Creek and Myrtle Creek. Other noted opportunities afforded by local land use planning processes to provide stronger protection of salmon and freshwater habitat. The Wild Salmon Policy was also seen as a potential tool that could help address many concerns, once it is implemented. Restoration in Lower Chickwat Creek and a successful terminal marked coho fishery were noted as other positive examples of local activities supporting wild salmon.

3.2 IMPORTANT ISSUES RELATING TO WILD SALMON POPULATIONS

Issues of importance that participants reported as affecting or potentially affecting regional wild salmon populations can be summarized under the following key themes:

• Freshwater habitat protection: This was overwhelmingly the key issue and leading concern heard in both communities. Local speakers described many specific local examples of damage and/or threats to wild salmon and freshwater habitat from rapid urbanization, logging, industry and agriculture. Concerns encompassed governance, ineffective legislation, a lack of enforcement, declining resources and a lack of leadership and political will at all levels of government to protect local wild salmon stocks in the face of human development pressures.

- Water management: Participants described threats from large-scale projects, like the Pitt River independent hydro proposal and Spring Bar gravel removal. They also spoke about a failure to consider and address cumulative impacts, for example with regard to the falling water table in the Fraser Valley or water extraction licences on the Sunshine Coast. Many described low flows and smaller streams drying out in both communities. In Sechelt, Council heard about flash flooding and sedimentation due to poor logging practices, while storm water management was cited as a concern in the Fraser Valley. Dumping, pollution and emissions from farms and industry were cited in both communities, with concerns about a lack of enforcement and penalties for offenders.
- Ecosystems: In Sechelt, particularly, the importance of ecosystems was stressed, with discussion of changes observed locally involving species like herring and seals that were seen as potentially important to salmon, as well as other population shifts that might signify changes in marine ecosystems. Participants stressed the importance of ecosystem-based management for freshwater as well as marine environments, and of considering ecosystem implications in hatchery production planning.
- Enhancement: This was an issue in both communities. On the one hand, user groups stressed that they would have no fishing without hatcheries to compensate for the impacts of lost habitat, with concerns about underfunding of hatcheries. On the other hand, several speakers expressed concerns about diminishing returns despite production increases and/or ecosystem impacts of enhancement and stressed the need for better evaluation, including analysis of the cost of producing hatchery fish. Other points included concerns about the loss of biodiversity due to brood stock collection methods, and a suggestion to review the current CEDP vs. PIP hatchery funding models.
- **Funding:** Reductions in stock assessment, declining support for restoration and stewardship and a reduced DFO staff presence on the ground were all linked to inadequate funding and cited as important concerns.
- **Fishing pressures:** Declining stocks, pressures from user groups, and fishing methods considered inappropriate by some participants were blamed for conflicts in the Lower Fraser. In Sechelt, there were calls for a moratorium on commercial herring harvest, due to concerns about this being linked to survival of wild salmon.
- Education: Both communities discussed the importance of education and of engaging younger citizens to support wild salmon conservation. It was suggested that property owners adjacent to streams should be better informed about how and why to protect riparian zones for the benefit of wild salmon. A better understand of the needs of wild salmon among decision makers who approve residential and other projects was also seen as key to better planning to protect freshwater habitat.

3.3 LOCAL SOLUTIONS

The Council heard a few examples of local success stories. However, many participants felt that much could be done to reverse declines and support local wild salmon populations. An example cited is through education and promoting more awareness at all levels that wild salmon and people can coexist and by involving more children and young people in stewardship and conservation activities. Management approaches that reflect a better appreciation of ecosystem links were proposed, both for the marine and freshwater environments. Many participants also stressed a need for stronger legislation to support water management for the benefit of salmon and people, better enforcement of existing legislation and stiff penalties for pollution. There were also calls for more funding and support for local enhancement, restoration and stewardship activities. Sunshine Coast residents noted lots of potential habitat in local streams for wild salmon, and much local interest in restoring and protecting those systems, but none of them are designated as having fisheries values. Attendees urged the PFRCC to convey a strong message about the need for action, with several suggesting there are too many

meetings and too much talk that does not result in meaningful change. And finally, it was also suggested that implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy would do much to resolve many of the concerns that were raised.

Many participants expressed skepticism that the necessary leadership and political will existed to do what is necessary for the conservation of wild salmon in their communities. Several stressed the need for local solutions and for local communities and user groups to come together and work together. In Sechelt, there was discussion about the effectiveness of local community activism to protect threatened creeks. Participants also urged that groups concerned with salmon conservation utilize local and regional land use planning processes already underway to highlight salmon values and how those might be protected in the face of intense pressures from economic development in these regions.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The PFRCC has benefited from listening to comments and perspectives on local salmon issues during our meetings. The Council appreciates the passion and ideas that communities have shared and the issues we face in maintaining healthy salmon stocks and habitats. The PFRCC will continue this discussion with other communities across BC in support of healthy salmon populations and high quality habitat, and will share the information obtained with federal and provincial fisheries ministers and with the public.

Background: Participants were invited during each meeting to record specific examples of local issues, challenges and opportunities directly on the large table maps provided. There was some overlap between geographic areas covered at each meeting, so comments and notations from the five Fort Langley table maps were compiled in the two Fort Langley maps shown below, while the Sechelt table maps were compiled into the three maps shown below. Participant comments from the maps were transcribed verbatim and listed in the accompanying tables below. The number beside each comment in the tables cross-references the comment to the relevant location recorded on the accompanying map below it.

Comments provided by participants during the mapping exercise ranged from the general (e.g. concerns about results-based management) to very site-specific examples that illustrate and reinforce key themes and concerns discussed at the community meetings. Many comments emphasized concerns relating to protection of local freshwater habitat and water management. An example is the concern heard from several Sechelt participants about current and future impacts from logging and private development, and about the need for more effective measures to protect wild coho and chum runs in the face of intensified logging activity around Myrtle Creek—the last remaining wild salmon index system for that part of the coast.

TABLE A1-A1. Fort Langley meeting, March 3, 2008.

Map Ref #	Public Comments
1	Massive housing development—no setbacks from streams
2	Urban development—lack of DFO enforcement
3	Riparian Areas Regulation leading to inappropriately small setbacks
4	Sand dredging in lower river killing euchalon
5	Need for gravel in Essence Creek—No spawning habitat
6	Urban Development—chum/coho habitat destruction
7	Boat launches—not enough public parking and access
8	Dredging concerns—no dredging
9	Salmon River—Lack of water, poor water quality, agricultural and industrial runoff
10	Falling water table
11	Small tributaries running dry in summer
12	Enhance Jeffreys Brook without destroying it for private development
13	Logan Creek wetland—don't build on wetland
14	Nicomekl River—Low salmon returns
15	Poor planning for Campbell Heights leading to adverse effects on Latimer pond
16	Streams go dry every summer

MAP A1-A1. Summary of comments heard by the PFRCC in Fort Langley, March 3, 2008.

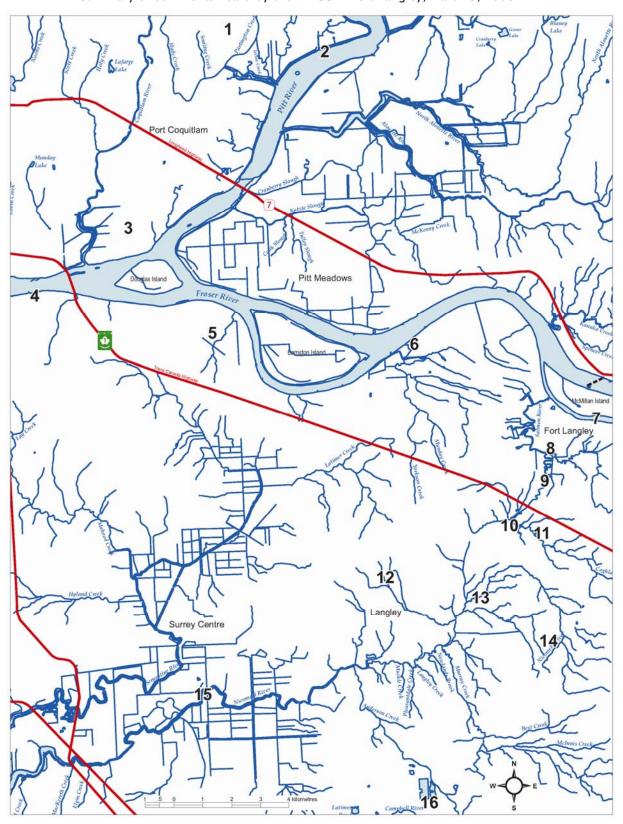


TABLE A1-A2. F ort Langley meeting, March 3, 2008

Map Ref #	Public Comments
1	Not enough enforcement-poaching
2	Dredging making deeper shipping channels
3	Cranberry/Blueberry farms-water use, poor water quality and agricultural runoff
4	Public dumping
5	Gloucester Industrial Estate—water flow control issues
6	Fish kill 4 years in a row. no results from province or federal government
7	Manure dumping. Reported but not addressed
8	Runoff from development and tree removal

MAP A1-A2. Summary of comments heard by the PFRCC in Fort Langley, March 3, 2008.

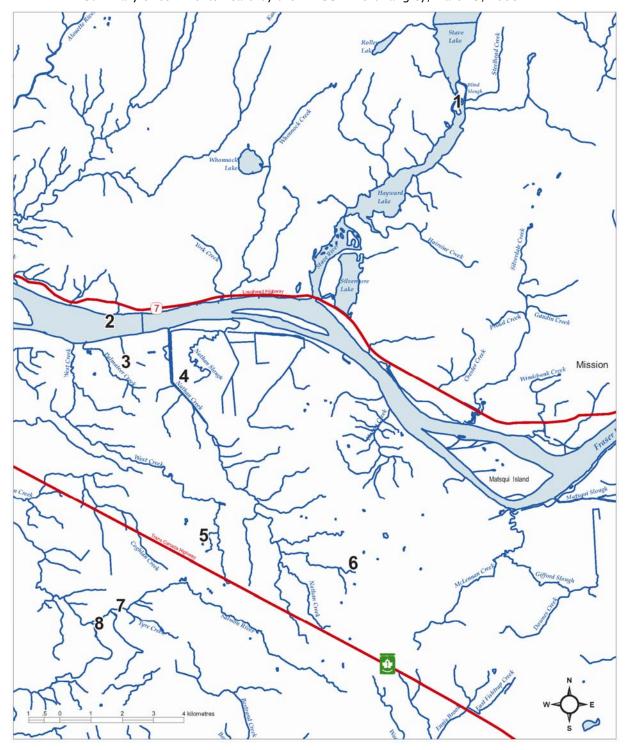


TABLE A1-B1. Sechelt meeting, March 5, 2008.

Map Ref #	Public Comments
1	Lower Tzoonie River-Habitat degradation due to hydro
2	Clowhom River–Herring resources depleted
3	Wakefield Creek-Fish run sacrificed due to housing
4	Chapman Creek-Water flow problems in side channels losing hundreds of salmon every year when channels dry up
5	Narrows Inlet-Seal predatory problems
6	Chapman Creek-Water extraction by industry
7	Chapman Creek-Watershed logging issues
8	Edward Lake-Higher lake dam
9	Lower Sakinaw Lake-Seal predation
10	Storm Bay-Lower chum population
11	Angus Creek-Fewer coho, very few pinks, no chum
12	Sechelt Inlet near Gray Creek-Loss of eelgrass. Many otters and hundreds of seals
13	Porpoise Bay-Successful terminal marked coho fishery. Sediment from development-mitigation put in after the fact. Developer went right through wetlands, so water now abnormally high.
14	Lower Chickwat Creek-Watershed restoration

MAP A1-B1. Summary of comments heard by the PFRCC in Sechelt, March 5, 2008.

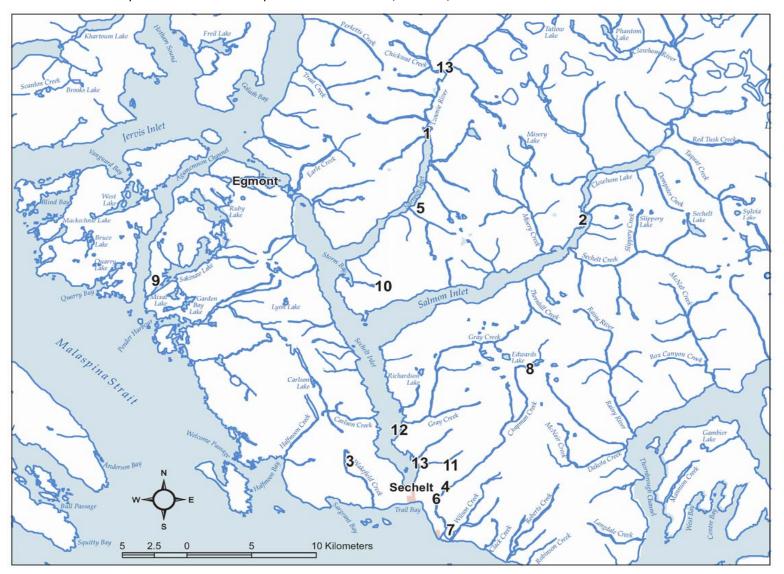


TABLE A1-B2. Sechelt meeting, March 5, 2008.

Map Ref #	Public Comments
1	Myrtle Creek-Logging affecting coho [concerns about future and present logging]
2	Lois River-Affected by logging, no riparian areas will be left
3	Jefferd Creek-Affected by logging
4	Blubber Bay-LNG plant killing local salmon and other sea life.
5	Lang Creek-No accurate hatchery counts
6	Lang Bay-No genetic diversity left as all roe come from here (using same brood stock)

MAP A1-B2. Summary of comments heard by the PFRCC in Sechelt, March 5, 2008.

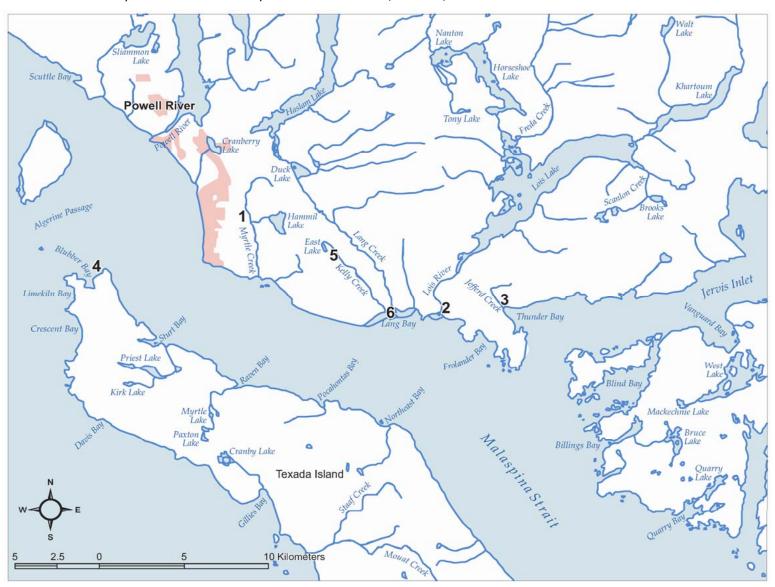
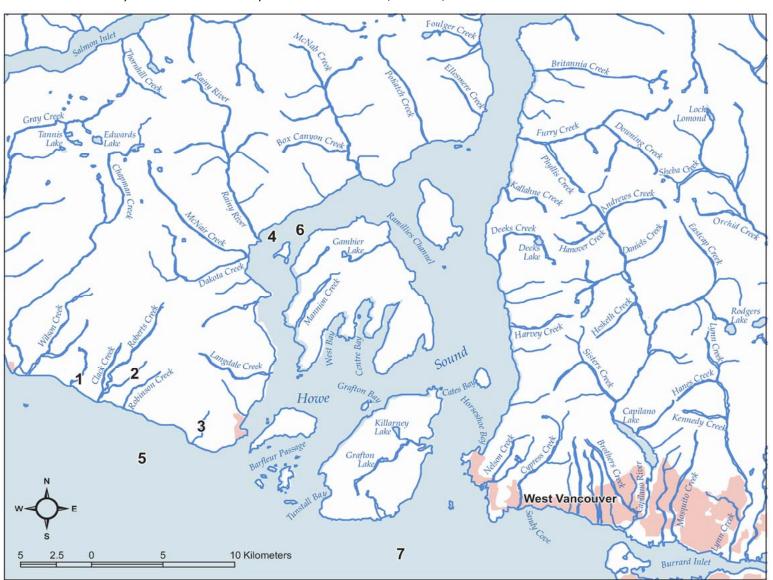


TABLE A1-B3. Sechelt meeting, March 5, 2008.

Map Ref #	Public Comments
1	No access for spawners in this creek
2	Low chum, no coho
3	Chaster Creek-Very few coho, no chum
4	Port Mellon-Still dumping toxic waste needs to be eliminated
5	Outer Howe Sound and up to Roberts Creek-High concentration of jellyfish
6	Thornbrough Channel-High levels of sea lice in cutthroat trout
7	Lower Strait of Georgia-Low herring stocks

MAP A1-B3. Summary of comments heard by the PFRCC in Sechelt, March 5, 2008.





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