

Pacific Fisheries Restructuring and Adjustment Program

Resource Rebuilding Habitat Conservation and Stewardship

Discussion paper

Background

Fisheries and Oceans Canada received considerable public advice and feedback during the 1998 coho recovery team consultations on the critical state of coho salmon stocks in the Pacific region. The consultations revealed unanimous public and stakeholder support for rebuilding wild coho stocks. Much of the advice focussed on the need to both restore degraded spawning and rearing habitat and improve the protection of existing habitats. As a result of this advice, in June, 1998 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced a five year, \$100 million Resource Rebuilding strategy to bolster the federal government's actions on salmon habitat. This strategy, which is part of a larger Pacific Fisheries Restructuring and Adjustment Program has four components: habitat restoration; strategic enhancement; establishment of a long range fund for community projects, and improved habitat protection. The latter component, referred to as the Habitat Conservation and Stewardship program, is the focus of this document.

What is the Habitat Conservation and Stewardship program?

This is a new and innovative approach to habitat protection and community stewardship. The program will establish a regional network of Habitat Auxiliaries and Stewardship Coordinators. They will support community watershed stewardship groups and/or work directly and proactively with local First Nations, developers, industry and other government agencies. The key objectives are to prevent damage to fish habitat, advance sustainable land and water use planning and promote better land and water use practices.

The success of this program depends largely on the ability to locally design and deliver effective habitat protection and watershed stewardship programs. One objective is to support or augment, with additional resources, established and successful fish habitat protection programs. Where local mechanisms or programs do not exist but are required, stewardship coordinators and auxiliaries will help establish and support them. The focus will be on proactive activities, which provide habitat protection both in the short and long term.

PROGRAM VISION

*Partnerships to enhance habitat protection
and expand community capacity to steward fisheries resources.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Strategic delivery in priority watersheds**
- **Scientific information exchange with stakeholders**
- **Field orientated program design and implementation**
- **Creation of long-term community stewardship capacity**
- **Clear linkages with existing and effective habitat protection programs**
- **Communication across governments, First Nations, industry and communities**
- **Adaptive program that responds to local opportunities, abilities and fish benefits**

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- **Incorporate fish habitat protection requirements into local land and water use plans.**
- **Increase public and stakeholders awareness of fish habitat requirements.**
- **Improve habitat mapping and inventory data required for land management and resource planning.**
- **Increase local stream surveillance and monitoring.**
- **Improved compliance monitoring of development projects.**
- **Provide technical information, advice and support to partners and communities.**
- **Pilot development of watershed management plans on several priority watersheds.**
- **Enhance and restore habitats as part of a watershed management plan.**
- **Increased community responsibility for watershed management**

Program Elements

What are Stewardship Coordinators ?

Stewardship coordinators (SCs) are community liaison personnel who will work extensively with local watershed groups that represent the public interest in fish and fish habitat. Stewardship coordinators will be assigned to major watersheds or to specific geographic areas to work with stakeholders, including non-government organizations, agency staff, First Nations and local governments, to promote and implement more effective local protection and restoration of fish habitat. They will help develop and support fisheries conservation councils or watershed stewardship groups to identify and address fish habitat concerns by participating in the development of local or regional watershed management plans. They will support community habitat protection, restoration and enhancement projects that are part of local watershed management plans. Stewardship coordinators will also provide public education and information on fish biology, habitat requirements and public roles in fish habitat protection. They will coordinate training for volunteers in habitat assessment and planning as well as inventory, monitoring and enhancement/restoration techniques. They will encourage local watershed stakeholders to play an active role in local decision-making by compiling and providing local fish and habitat

information, being advocates for community concerns and promoting local habitat protection. Stewardship coordinators will also work closely with habitat auxiliaries and other DFO staff to respond to public concerns and local queries about stewardship and habitat issues.

What are Habitat Auxiliaries ?

Habitat auxiliaries (HAs) will add to DFO's habitat field presence and provide additional support for existing habitat protection programs. They will also work with stakeholder groups, including non-government organizations, other agency staff, First Nations, and local governments, to promote more effective protection and restoration of fish habitat. These individuals will anticipate, prevent and where necessary, respond to habitat impact events. Habitat auxiliaries will work proactively with stakeholders, planners and other clients by providing technical information and data to improve planning and decision-making. They will also provide guidance and advice on the application of habitat protection standards, project approval and assessment requirements, and legal obligations under the Fisheries Act. Auxiliaries will play a significant role in monitoring works in and around water to ensure projects comply with fish habitat protection requirements and will educate the public and industry about fish needs, habitat impacts and mitigation measures. They will work closely with stewardship coordinators to provide local community-based watershed councils with assessment, planning and investigation help. They will also, with other DFO field staff, be the public's first point of contact regarding habitat problems and inquiries.

How will the program be implemented?

The program will be delivered locally since there are a variety of habitat issues, geographic conditions, opportunities and community capacities across B.C. and the Yukon. The emergence of other local habitat protection programs also dictates that this program be tailored to fit each unique circumstance.

All HAs and SCs will receive essential training and go through a mentoring process designed to familiarize them with existing habitat protection programs, techniques and local staff and resources. HAs and SCs will work closely with area fisheries staff (community advisors, habitat technicians, etc.) to ensure efficient coordination of activities and effective delivery of services.

Discussions with potential partners in government and communities will determine the best way to implement the program. These discussions will continue through to early 1999 in advance of full program implementation. Some discussions with potential partners have already occurred, and others are ongoing. For example, we will meet with groups and/or staff from Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Ministry of Forests, Fisheries Renewal B.C., Community Futures Development Corporations, Urban Salmon Habitat Program, B.C. Watershed Stewardship Alliance, Community Fisheries Development Centres, Forest Renewal B.C., municipalities, First Nations and others to explore opportunities for cost sharing, work sharing and effective joint program implementation.

Innovative administrative arrangements will be explored and adapted to further program objectives and delivery. For example, some Habitat Auxiliaries and Stewardship Coordinators may be DFO staff, while others could be retained as contractors to work with (or for) a non-government organization (NGO), a community group or a local watershed council. Where opportunities exist the positions may be cost shared with other agencies, NGOs, First Nations or municipalities.

In order to make these community-based programs work, there will be a need for DFO to provide ongoing advice and support in the form of information, technical advice, guidelines, training, communications materials, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support, etc. These support services will be provided as part of the program.

When will the program start?

Pilot implementation of the Habitat Conservation and Stewardship program will begin early in 1999. Additional positions will be hired or contracted, beginning in April 1999, to fully implement the program.

What will happen at the end of year five?

The program will be evaluated regularly to determine the effectiveness of these new positions and how best to continue delivery beyond 2003. Efforts will be made before the end of this program to re-deploy these positions to self-sufficient watershed groups or to agencies and organizations that require this ongoing service and are capable of supporting them. It may also be desirable to recruit staff from this pool of trained, experienced individuals to fill new or vacant positions as part of a revitalization of DFO during the next three to five years.

Experience has shown that effective watershed groups, municipal environmental programs, First Nations fisheries programs and other local initiatives can become self-sufficient with some initial funding, technical and practical training and time to develop. SC and HA positions that have been created to support these local programs may be retained by such groups once the Resource Rebuilding program ends. Long-range funding and administrative arrangements that encourage this will be promoted.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What geographic area does this program apply to?

Habitat auxiliaries and stewardship coordinators will be deployed throughout salmon-bearing watersheds in the Pacific Region (including the Yukon).

How will the habitat auxiliaries (HAs) and stewardship coordinators (SCs) work with other habitat programs and avoid duplication?

HAs and SCs will work within geographically defined areas to deliver locally based programs. Where there exists an effective local or regional board, or mechanism for program delivery, staff will attempt to create partnerships or augment these local programs with new resources.

Discussions are also occurring with other resource management agencies, crown corporations, local governments, First Nations and public groups to explore opportunities for collaborative program delivery. Innovative administrative arrangements will be examined wherever they will optimize use of these resources, minimize duplication with other local programs and increase fish habitat protection. Flexibility in program design will be emphasised.

The objective will be to establish and maintain a strong link between habitat auxiliaries and stewardship coordinators in each geographic area.

Some examples of cooperative delivery could include:

- SC or HA participation in each local Fisheries Renewal B.C. Board to prioritize and implement local watershed-based fish habitat protection and restoration programs/projects;
- augmentation or extension of existing municipal environmental coordinator positions that are currently cost shared by the province and local governments;
- assignment (on a geographic basis) of dedicated agriculture coordinators or auxiliaries to work with Ministry of Agriculture and Foods extension officers to expand outreach/education programs with farmers and ranchers to address fish and fish habitat issues; and
- deployment of a stewardship coordinator to a well-established watershed council or stewardship group to assist the group with local watershed planning and habitat protection and restoration projects

How will these positions provide a long-term solution to support the salmon resource?

Long-term habitat protection requires effective long-range land and water use planning. The most important technical basis for good planning is accurate habitat inventory information, which both HAs and SCs will help provide. This type of information will also be used to develop watershed-based management plans that provide long-term direction for sustainable fish production in many parts of the region. Both habitat auxiliaries and stewardship coordinators (in conjunction with local community interests) will raise the profile of fish and fish habitat in all local decision-making forums and will promote (where necessary) changes in the way we currently use land and water resources. Also, these individuals will provide education on habitat protection measures and work with other levels of government and the private sector to create incentives for habitat protection.

Who can you contact for more information on this program?

Information about this program is available through the following staff in each DFO Habitat and Enhancement Branch area:

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| Coastal B.C. North/Transboundary (Prince Rupert) | Martin Forbes (250) 639-9616 or Prince Rupert office (250) 627-3448 |
| Coastal B.C. South (Nanaimo) | Brian Tutty (250) 756-7265 John Lamb (250) 756-7277 |
| Fraser-Thompson (Kamloops) | Mike Crowe (250) 851-4963 |
| Upper Fraser (Prince George) | Nick Leone (250) 561-5368 |
| Lower Fraser | Jim Elliott (604) 826-6314 |
| Yukon (Whitehorse) | Gail Faulkner (867) 393-6730 |
| Regional Headquarters (Vancouver) | Greg Mallette (604) 666-1459 |