

Building Bridges with First Nations Habitat Conservation and Stewardship Program

In June 1998, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) announced the new Canadian Fisheries Adjustment and Restructuring (CFAR) plan. The CFAR plan was aimed at restoring the health of Canada's Pacific salmon fisheries through 12 broad policies as well as fisheries adjustments and restructuring measures of \$400 million for the West Coast. These policy principles fell into three main categories: conservation, sustainable use and improved decision-making.

CFAR has been implemented through three broad categories: Restructuring the Fishery, Community Economic Development, and Resource Rebuilding. The main goals established for Resource Rebuilding were to help restore degraded habitat, improve habitat protection, build on the success of the Salmon Enhancement Program (SEP) and better involve stakeholders and the public in habitat-related activities. One component of the Strategy was the Habitat Conservation and Stewardship Program (HCSP).

HCSP was designed to fund a network of Stewardship Coordinator (SC),¹ Habitat Auxiliary (HA), Habitat Steward (HS),² and Habitat Fishery Officer (HFO) positions to increase community's capacity to participate in watershed management planning and proactive habitat protection activities. The Program focused on providing people to work with local communities to protect fish habitat rather than on funding capital projects. A Community Partner (CP) signs a contribution agreement with DFO to hire SC or HS positions and are solely responsible for the administration of that position. Community Partners employ SC's or HS's either as staff or by contract. First Nations, Roundtables, local government, NGO's or other organizations have served as Community Partners. In consultation with the Area Coordinator, the Community Partner develops work plans, hires or contracts SC's or HS's, monitors and evaluates progress, and arranges support services for SC and/or HS positions.

It is important to understand the benefit of HCSP to the Department. This paper specifically examines the role HCSP has played in building bridges with and building the capacity of First Nations. HCSP's vision was based on a desire to:

Establish partnerships to enhance habitat protection and expand community capacity to steward fish habitat resources.

Furthermore, two of the Program's guiding principles are directly related to working with and supporting First Nations:

- *Communication across governments, First Nations, industry, and communities.*
- *Building of long-term community stewardship capacity.*

HCSP is delivered in DFO Pacific Region. HCSP was designed to fund a network of Stewardship Coordinator (SC), Habitat Auxiliary (HA), Habitat Steward (HS), and Habitat Fishery Officer (HFO) positions to increase community's capacity to participate in watershed management planning and proactive habitat protection activities. To meet the diverse needs of communities, four types of positions collectively known as "stewards" were developed and subsequently funded through HCSP: Stewardship Coordinator

¹ SC position serves as a community liaison, generally assigned to specific geographic areas associated with watersheds or communities. They work extensively on habitat protection with existing fish habitat advocacy groups, community watershed initiatives, First Nations, local governments, agencies and other stakeholders. Where fish advocacy groups are not established, the SC helps in their genesis and development. They also provide support to existing watershed councils, forums, roundtables and watershed management processes. As well, SC's should help to create new structures and processes that foster community stewardship in areas where these do not yet exist.

² HS is a technical position hired or otherwise retained by non-DFO agencies, organizations or entities. They may be assigned by watershed, geographic area, local government, or industry sector. HS's work proactively with other agencies and stakeholder groups and individuals to encourage more effective habitat protection, and may also support restoration and enhancement activities as a secondary priority. The HS position focus is to anticipate and prevent disruption to fish habitat. Some local government HS's may respond to habitat impact events. HS' may provide technical information or other services for improved planning and decision-making.

(SC), Habitat Steward (HS), Habitat Auxiliary (HA), and Habitat Fishery Officer (HFO). HA and HFO positions are employed by DFO, while SC and HS positions are employed by Community Partners. Of the 120 people hired under the Program, 103 are stewards. Community Partner (CP) organisations are an integral and important part of HCSP delivery. With program funding, they employ SCs or HSs. Roundtables, First Nations, local government, Non-government Organisations (NGOs), and other organizations have served as partners.

It is important to understand the positive contribution that the Department, through HCSP, has made toward supporting and building First Nations capacity to steward fish habitat. Furthermore, it is also beneficial to have an understanding of the progress that DFO is making toward building cooperative relationships with First Nations. There were a total of 93 stewards sent the questionnaire, including SCs, HSs HFOs, and HAs. A total of 43 stewards (46 percent) completed the survey, including 25 SCs, 13 HSs and 6 HAs. Stewards that did not complete the survey (54 percent) are considered to have no involvement with First Nations.

AREA	TOTAL		Stewardship Coordinator		Habitat Steward		Habitat Auxiliary		Habitat Fishery Officer	
	Total	Comp.	Total	Comp.	Total	Comp.	Total	Comp.	Total	Comp.
BCIS	22	11	14	7	3	1	5	3	0	0
BCIN	4	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
C. Coast	8	4	5	3	2	0	1	1	0	0
L. Fraser	20	5	11	4	1	0	5	1	3	0
N. Coast	11	7	3	3	5	4	3	0	0	0
S. Coast	19	9	9	6	5	3	5	0	0	0
Yukon	8	6	1	1	6	4	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	92	44	45	25	24	13	20	6	3	0
%	100.0%	47.8%	48.9%	56.8%	26.1%	29.5%	21.7%	13.6%	3.3%	0.0%

There are 22 stewards who directly are employed by or take direction from a First Nations Band(s) or organization(s). Refer to Table 2 for a breakdown by Area. Twenty-four different First Nations Band(s) or organization(s) serve as Community Partners or give direction to HCSP stewards. This represents direct financial support by DFO to First Nations for an approximate total of \$1,287,264.00.

On average, stewards spent 47 percent of their time (anywhere from 3 to 100 percent) working directly for/with a First Nations Band(s) or organization(s). Stewards worked with First Nations Band(s) or organization(s) on education, enhancement, program development, coordination, stock management and assessment, restoration, building First Nations capacity, research, planning, proposal writing, project advice, technical support, training, stream and site monitoring, fund raising, attend meetings administration, habitat assessment, youth camps, biological inventories, and visioning.

There are 32 stewards who work with a First Nations Band(s) or organization(s).³ Refer to Table 2 for a breakdown by Area. Stewards reported working with 62 different First Nations Band(s) or organization(s). This represents indirect financial support by DFO to First Nations for an approximate total of \$1,852,111.00.

On average, stewards spent 400 hours per year working with First Nations Band(s) or organization(s) (anywhere from 12 to 1,755 hours per year). The relationships that stewards had with First Nations Band(s) or organization(s) varied greatly. Informal relationships between stewards and First Nations involved attending meetings and workshops, organizing events (e.g., planting day, Rivers Day), training, supervision, providing support, sitting on committees, information sharing, capacity building, sharing projects, liaising, coordinating, consultations, and facilitating meetings.

The types of projects that stewards worked on and support that they provided to First Nations included helping to develop funding and project proposals, writing letters of support, mapping, planning, education,

³ There were 12 stewards who had both direct and indirect (less frequently with less direction) relationships with First Nations Bands(s) or organization(s).

restoration projects, fund raising, celebration activities, writing letters of support, identifying habitat restoration sites/opportunities, developing protocols, fish releases, attend on-site assessments, enhancement projects, site layout, environmental monitoring, conduct presentations, watershed planning, fish salvage, beach seining program, intertidal assessments, stream monitoring, project design and implementation, stock assessment, fish habitat research, landowner contact, and conservation and stewardship camp for youths.

Some First Nations contributed directly to one-half of the contribution agreement costs for the steward position. Furthermore, stewards received many in-kind donations from First Nations, in many cases First Nations covered office rent and expenses.

Area	Stewardship Coordinator		Habitat Steward		Habitat Auxiliary	
	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
BC Interior South	7	8	7	4	0	1
BC Interior North	0	2	0	1	0	1
Central Coast	2	3	2	2	0	0
Lower Fraser	1	4	1	4	0	0
North Coast	5	3	2	1	3	2
South Coast	4	7	4	5	0	2
Yukon	3	5	0	1	3	3
TOTAL	22	32	16	18	6	9

Overall, the relationship between HCSP and the Aboriginal community has been very successful. According to several Community Partners and Area Coordinators, stewards were showing progress in improving their group's relationship with First Nations. Stewards reported that they thought that certain First Nations organizations were particularly pleased with the Program and grateful to have a local person acting in the steward position. Several First Nation HCSP partners reported that the Program had significantly assisted them in their stewardship efforts and that they would try to support their steward position even without Program funding.

DFO staff also observed that First Nations were generally becoming more aware of fish habitat issues, increasing their understanding of biology. A steward from the Yukon observed that the aboriginal community provided a stable platform from which to build stewardship, and that First Nations embraced the work of stewards faster than anyone else in the community did.

List of First Nations Bands or Organizations that Directly Employ or Guide Stewards

1. Atlegay Fisheries Society
2. Bands of Okanagan Nation Alliance (7)
3. Campbell River Indian Band
4. Canadian Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission
5. Gitxsan Watershed Authorities
6. Ha Ho Payuk
7. Haida
8. Haisla First Nation
9. Hamatla Treaty Society
10. Heiltsuk First Nation
11. Kitasoo First Nation
12. Ko'p thut Society
13. Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council
14. Kwikwetlem First Nation
15. Nicola Tribal Association
16. Nuu-chah-nulthaht
17. Nuxalk Nation
18. Shuswap Nation Fisheries Commission
19. Spallumcheen Band
20. Quinsam Band
21. Taku River Tlingit First Nation
22. Thompson Basin Fisheries Council
23. Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs
24. Yukon Salmon Committee

List of First Nations Bands or Organizations that Stewards Work With

1. Adams Lake Band
2. Atlegay Fisheries Society
3. Campbell River Indian Band
4. Cariboo Tribal Council
5. Carrier Chilcotin Tribal
6. Carrier Sekani Tribal Council
7. Champagne-Aishihik First Nation
8. Chehalis
9. Cowichan Tribes
10. Dawson District Renewable Resources Council
11. Ehattesaht
12. En'owkin Centre
13. Esquimalt Nation
14. Gitanyow (Kitwanga)
 - a. Gitanyow Fisheries Authority
15. Gitsegukla Economic Development Society
16. Gitxsan
 - a. Gitxsan Watershed Authorities
17. Haisla
18. Halalt First Nations
19. Hamatla Treaty Society
20. Ka:'uy:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h'
21. Kamloops Indian Band
22. Katzie First Nations
23. Kitsumkalum Band Council
24. Kwikwetlam First Nation
25. Kwanlin Dun First Nation
26. Lakahamen; Seabird
27. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation
28. Little Shuswap
29. Lower Similkameen Indian Band
30. Matsqui First Nation
31. Mount Curry Indian Band
32. Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations
33. Musqueam First Nation
34. Northcoast Tribal Council
35. Nuchatlaht
36. Niskonlith Band
37. 'Namgis First Nation
38. North Thompson Indian Band
39. Office of the Wet'suwet'en, Wet'suwet'en Fisheries
40. Owekeeno First Nations
41. Pauquachin First Nation
42. Penticton Indian Band
43. Selkirk First Nation
44. Shuswap First Nations
 - a. Shuswap Nation Fisheries Commission
45. Spallumcheen Band
46. Snaw-naw-As First Nations
47. Snuneymuxw First Nations
48. Songhees First Nations
49. Soowahlie First Nation
50. Sto:lo First Nation
51. Sumas First Nation
52. Ta'an Kwach'an First Nations
53. Teslin Tlingit First Nation
54. Tsarlip First Nation
55. Tsawout First Nation
56. Tseycum First Nation
57. Tsilhqot'in National Government
58. Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations
59. T'Sou-ke First Nation Band
60. Tr'on dek Hwech'in First Nation
61. Ucluelet First Nation
62. Wet'suwet'en First Nations