

The B.C. Federation of Drift Fishers was instrumental in arranging and participating in the March 26th meeting with First Nations and the commercial fishing sector. This meeting was a direct result of several informal meetings with the Lower Fraser Fisheries Association (LFFA) toward developing an effective communication venue which could facilitate respectful discussion regarding the many issues impacting Fraser River fisheries. These discussions would involve all species, perhaps through a Round Table concept facilitated by the sectors with government participation by invite. The primary attendees would be harvester/fishers with other NGO's such as environmental groups invited as required.

This process recognizes the successes of initiatives such as the Fraser River Peacemakers and hope to build on the cooperative spirit that Peacemakers established. All parties agree that the Fraser River fishery is facing very significant challenges including extreme conservation concerns for Fraser River chinook and Fraser interior steelhead. Significant closures and fishing restrictions on the Fraser will be the norm this summer resulting in tremendous financial loss as well as loss of quality family fishing time.

All parties are supportive of finding solutions to benefit all fishers on the Fraser. The well attended March 26th meeting was an important first step in getting to know each other and hopefully develop trust between participants. Several respected First Nations organizations as well as regional and provincial sport fishing groups participated along with the commercial sector from the Fraser. Comments from these participants indicated that progress was made and there appeared to be consensus that these talks should continue.

The sport fishing sector is responsible for facilitating the next meeting and the BCFDF will play an important role in further talks. It is agreed by all participants that it will take the efforts of all user groups and the commitment of our fisheries managers to save our threatened salmon, steelhead and sturgeon stocks. It will take the commitment of all user groups to working together to ensure we have Fraser River fisheries for our respective future generations.

Rod Clapton

