



UPDATE ON RIVERS/SMITH INLETS SOCKEYE SALMON RUNS AT PACIFIC SALMON FOUNDATION WORKSHOP

Vancouver – June 5, 2003

Dr. Rick Routledge of Simon Fraser University updated guests at Pacific Salmon Foundation's Welcoming Reception of their "Common Vision" Workshop on his research into finding out why sockeye salmon runs in Rivers/Smith Inlets have been nearly wiped out.

"I don't accept DFO's position," said Dr. Routledge in his opening statement. "It's my understanding that the federal government believes that the decline in salmon runs in the Inlets is a natural downturn and will likely reverse in time. Their recommendation is that we curtail fishing, maintain monitoring and wait for the upturn. In my opinion, this is the worst conservation disaster that has occurred in British Columbia since the early 1900s. We need to know what has caused it."

Dr. Routledge is in the midst of a research project that is focusing on Rivers/Smith Inlets and the potential causes of the small runs. Routledge, with funding from the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund, has identified issues such as lack of food in the inlets during the outmigration period in addition to more obvious ones such as predation, destruction of habitat through logging, pollution from log dumps and clearcut logging, and overfishing. He believes there may also be a tie-in to nutrient depletion from heavy commercial fishing as well as changes in climate.

"Past studies have shown that El Nino periods become more intense and more frequent as the global climate becomes warmer. That is what we're seeing now – Rivers Inlet received unusually high freshwater runoff in the mid-1990 winters. This was also when the sockeye salmon declined most dramatically. This will have an impact on the hydrology of the area and may be part of the explanation of what is happening to the sockeye."

Dr. Routledge acknowledged that there is still more research to do and noted his gratitude for funding from Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund. "Our ultimate goal is to figure out what went wrong in Rivers/Smith Inlets so that we have a better knowledge of the sockeye salmon populations and, if a solution is possible, that we know what it is. I appreciate the fact that the Pacific Salmon Foundation are interested in getting science-based facts rather than jumping in to try to fix a problem without knowing what the real problem is."

Dr. Paul Kariya, Executive Director of PSF, echoed that thought: "This workshop is all about raising awareness of the issues that face the salmon resource in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to presentations on the latest research, panel discussions and information-sharing sessions, we're providing networking opportunities for PSF's traditional Community Salmon Program volunteers with our colleagues and partners from the federal and provincial governments, First Nations, science and academia, and the business community – all in an effort to reach a common vision which involves working together to explore the many facets of ensuring a sustainable wild salmon resource.

Pacific Salmon Foundation's Common Vision workshop is providing a forum for partners and supporters to evaluate their place in the challenging environment facing salmon conservation and stewardship practitioners. The workshop carries on through June 6th in Vancouver and features leading researchers and conservationists.

For more information on this event or on the Foundation, please visit www.pacificsalmon.ca or contact: Angus Mackay (amackay@psf.ca) or Courtney Haftfield (chatfield@psf.ca). Telephone 604-664-7664.

