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NEWS RELEASE

* For Immediate Release *

Mountain Pine Beetle flagged as potential threat to BC salmon

VANCOUVER, BC (March 22, 2007) The Pacific Salmon Foundation and Fraser Basin Council will study potential threats to wild salmon in BC from the mountain pine beetle, which has infested forests across the province.

Through their jointly managed Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program, the two organizations will strike a technical advisory committee to identify the anticipated impacts of mountain pine beetle on salmon and resident freshwater fish — as the kill-off of trees could mean loss of shade in fish habitat, as well as changes to water flow and temperature. The committee is expected to investigate ongoing monitoring that may be required to document the impacts to the fisheries resource and to recommend potential adaptive management strategies.

“There have been a number of studies focusing on the biology and behavior of the mountain pine beetle, containment of the spread and salvaging beetle-killed trees before they lose their economic value,” says Alan Kenney, who co-manages the Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program on behalf of Pacific Salmon Foundation. “Unfortunately, little is known about the full range of impacts to aquatic ecosystems and, in particular, to the salmon and fisheries resources in the mountain pine beetle-impacted areas.”

It is important to close the information gap, according to participants at a workshop sponsored by the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program in Prince George in January, “This was the first workshop where people had a look at the impacts of mountain pine beetle infestations on BC’s salmon and fisheries resources,” said Kenney. “We hope to start discussion with all the key stakeholders to identify what the impacts are, how we may be able to plan for them and, if at all possible, mitigate them.”

One key concern is that the loss of trees from beetle kill and/or salvage logging impacts the timing and intensity of spring peak stream and river flows in many places in the interior of BC. The changes in peak flows may, in turn, negatively impact late summer and fall water temperatures and levels for fish and aquatic life. Changes in water flow and temperature will affect:

- juvenile fish survival and migration
- fish incubation, rearing, and spawning habitat
- salmon spawning.

Additional potential issues include the large-scale salvage logging areas under consideration and the impact of logging and road construction on the riparian zone of streams and rivers critical to salmon and other species of fish.

“We all recognize that the mountain pine beetle infestation is having serious social, economic and environmental consequences across the Fraser Basin, and it’s encouraging when communities come together to find solutions.” says David Marshall, Executive Director of the Fraser Basin Council. “The Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program is playing its part by encouraging a broad range of people to work together on this and other issues that affect salmon and watersheds.”

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Think Salmon & the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program, jointly managed by Pacific Salmon Foundation and Fraser Basin Council, aims to inspire changes in human behavior for the benefit of salmon and the watersheds we all depend upon. The Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program is supported by the Provincial Living Rivers Trust Fund with \$10 million over four years, the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada with \$10 million over five years, contributed as \$5 million cash and \$5 million in kind, Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society with \$5 million over five years towards capacity at Pacific Salmon Foundation, along with commitments from several private sector partners. The funding is to support innovative initiatives that address the underlying challenges to Fraser River salmon populations.

Over 60 people attended the community workshop on Mountain Pine Beetle Threats to Salmon and Fisheries Resources in BC. Representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, BC Ministry of Environment, the Pacific Fisheries Resource and Conservation Council, FORREX and Golder Associates assisted with the planning and organization of this workshop. Other organizations attending included BC Ministry of Forests and Range, the First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance, the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat, , University of Northern BC, the Council of Forest Industries, CanFor, community stewards and other non-government organizations. Workshop proceedings are being developed jointly by the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program (www.thinksalmon.com) and the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (www.fish.bc.ca) and will be available on-line shortly.

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