



Salmon River Watershed Roundtable



NEWS RELEASE

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ONE STREAM AT A TIME – SALMON RIVER CHOSEN FOR RECOVERY PLAN FUNDING

Salmon River Watershed, BC. Pacific Salmon Foundation in collaboration with the Thompson Basin Fisheries Council (TBFC) has selected the Salmon River as the next target watershed for salmon recovery through the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund (PSEF).

The PSEF is an innovative and permanent long-term source of funding that was established with the federal government's contribution of \$30 million in 2000. The fund's investment interest will be used to support salmon recovery in priority areas of BC and the Yukon. The program manager for the PSEFS is Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF).

The Salmon River Watershed is a large watershed located in south central BC covering an area of 150,000 hectares from the headwaters in the Upper Nicola, including parts of Douglas Lake Ranch, through to Westwold, Falkland, and Silver Creek all the way downstream to the river mouth near Salmon Arm.

"The timing of this PSEFS support couldn't be better for the Salmon River," said a very pleased Jamie Felhauer, Chair of the Salmon River Watershed Roundtable. "We would like to thank the PSF for this opportunity.

"Contributions made towards our program by landowners, First Nations, industry and agency partners over the past ten years have enabled the completion of a watershed plan just this March," continued Jamie.

"We now have a watershed sustainability plan with 11 recommended programs, supported by federal and provincial ministries, First Nations, industry, and local landowners. Recovery of coho and other fish

populations and their habitat is a significant part of the plan. We can now begin implementing those parts of the plan that are consistent with PSF objectives.”

The Salmon River watershed is the second Thompson Basin stream to receive PSEFS attention. The Coldwater River near Merritt was chosen in March 2001 as one of the initial two watersheds in the province to be the focus of recovery plans.

The TBFC is an open, non-profit regional stewardship network dedicated to the vision of “restoring wild fish stocks, habitats and community fisheries in the Thompson River Basin.”

Asked to assist in making the selection, the TBFC Steering Committee expanded their regular meetings and invited community representatives from various fisheries stewardship groups in the region.

“Because of our previous work as a Fisheries Renewal BC partner group and our ongoing relationship with fisheries stewardship programs, we were confident we knew who would be interested in this process. Almost all identified groups were able to participate in the two meetings held last November,” stated Murray Ross, TBFC Program Coordinator.

The TBFC conducted a detailed review process to rate and rank 84 streams in the Thompson Basin. Criteria used included: salmon stocks at risk, condition of fish habitat, harvest impacts, potential for recovery, ability for local delivery and potential to leverage other funding. The initial watersheds considered were based on the known presence of coho salmon, which were seen as the key species in the region due to their listing as endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

Despite some evidence of rebounding of stocks in the last few years, there are still 63 watersheds in the Thompson Basin where coho populations can be classified as critical or poor.

“We will recover these endangered coho stocks one stream at a time. None of these watersheds will be neglected, as they all contribute to the biodiversity and productivity of Thompson Basin coho,” explains Murray Ross.

“Setting priorities and choosing one watershed over another is never easy,” said Rich Chapple, Director of Salmon Programs for PSF, “so we are grateful for the TBFC’s leadership in developing a consensus among all of the key stewardship groups in the Thompson Basin to recommend the Salmon River. When the time comes that we have more resources, this experience will be useful in identifying the next watershed for our salmon recovery program. In the meantime, and in order to be effective, we have to do it ‘stream by stream.’”

Activities supported by the PSEFS will be based on the recovery plan. For 2003, a budget of \$40,000 has been identified by PSF to complete a recovery plan document that will in turn direct additional funds

to support priority projects identified by the plan in 2004 and beyond. Eligible activities include but are not limited to:

- Protecting and restoring habitat;
- Restoring fish access to critical habitat;
- Restoring adequate water flows;
- Improving freshwater and marine survival;
- Providing information for fisheries management;
- Employing selective harvesting methods; and,
- Education.

The effectiveness of the recovery plan and activities will be evaluated through the monitoring of habitat (surveys of habitat condition and function), stock status (estimates of spawning numbers and fry and smolt production) and fisheries (monitoring harvests in key fisheries).

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