



# **Development of a Precautionary Approach management framework for New Brunswick Atlantic salmon fisheries**

**input received from Indigenous groups and stakeholders  
Fall-winter 2018-2019**



## Meetings held in 2018

- Red Bank July 11: Miramichi area FNs & Elsipogtog FN representatives, Indigenous organizations (MTI, Anqotum, Kopit Lodge)
- Campbellton October 9: Listuguj, Esgenoôpetitj representatives, and MTI
- Woodstock October 10: Maliseet First Nations (Woodstock, Tobique) and organizations (MNCC, WNNB) Representatives
- Fredericton October 11: NBAPC
- Miramichi October 25: general meeting with stakeholders and indigenous groups



## General / initial comments from discussions with indigenous groups

Indigenous fisheries are less damaging to salmon than many other activities or issues, i.e. recreational fisheries, clearcutting, construction activities on the rivers, poaching, Greenland fishery, tubing, jet boats, or striped bass;

Food fishery is a right and should never be questioned. This table is not supposed to serve as a negotiation for our food fisheries;

First Nations should be the ones leading this discussion within their own communities;

If a salmon stock ever gets listed under the Species at Risk Act as endangered, will the PA still apply?

The *Sparrow decision* says that First Nations' access should be satisfied before any other fishery can take place;

Salmon is not just important for food, it is a cultural and spiritual staple. The PA framework doesn't capture that, or the cultural, social or ceremonial loss caused by low salmon returns;

You have an obligation for a meaningful consultation process on this approach, as it could result in limiting our people to exercise what was guaranteed to us;

This is an opportunity to develop co-management with Indigenous groups, and adopt a more reconciliatory approach;

Our interest is in the right to manage our fisheries ourselves;

Recreational fisheries stakeholders should get educated on the Indigenous right to fish, and on the Indigenous priority of access;



## **Comments from indigenous groups on the Precautionary Approach Framework, and on adapting harvest to abundance**

The Precautionary Approach should not affect the indigenous right to fish;

When a fishery is managed by effort, managing by harvested numbers can be a problem; It would be worthwhile developing a PA management framework specifically for indigenous fisheries;

We support conservation. Whatever the decision rules will be, we do not want decision rules that will end up depleting salmon numbers;

It is questionable if anglers should have access to recreational fisheries when stocks are in the critical zone. Even our (indigenous) fisheries are questionable in the critical zone;

Our communities have already been adjusting their harvest to the abundance – they decreased their harvest based on low numbers;

Indigenous communities will never want to lose a species in their fisheries agreement, but we are open to discussing replacement strategies for times of low abundance.



## Comments received from Indigenous groups about the recreational fishery

Catch and release mortality takes away salmon from Aboriginals. It should be accounted for;

Recreational fisheries could maybe be based on a certain % of the allocation or catches in indigenous fisheries;

The recreational fishery is like a commercial fishery; people make money with it, commercially;

DFO could consider giving guide licenses to Aboriginals only (so Aboriginals could benefit from the recreational fishery). Or, if a grilse quota is given to the recreational fishery, Aboriginals could manage that access.

Disagree with lowering the harvest from Aboriginal people in order to provide for the recreational fishery (i.e. catch and release). DFO must recognize FSC as priority over recreational fishing

Some not supportive of the recreational fishery, because of C&R mortality

One suggestion for a moratorium on recreational fishing for several years or until stocks are back to sustainable levels.



## **internal consultations / questions from DFO to Indigenous groups and communities:**

- 1. What should be the removals of salmon (from all fisheries) when stocks are in the critical zone, cautious zone, and healthy zone?**
- 2. When (at what level of salmon abundance) can the recreational fisheries (i.e., catch and release and/or retention) take place, considering priority access to Indigenous people?**
- 3. What could help improve the relationship between users of the resource?**



## **Points of discussion at the October, 25 meeting in Miramichi**

- Summary of previous steps (establishment of Limit Reference Points for salmon rivers) and further steps needed to gather recommendations for a PA management framework;
- Summary of indigenous consultations;
- Group discussion : recommendations regarding Upper Stock Reference (USR) points, and decision rules in the recreational fishery



## Initial comments received during the meeting October, 25

- Difficulty of forecasting future returns based on what returned in the past; suggestions to look at averages or trends over several years; some mentions of support for a mid-season review. Issue with high year-to-year variability;
- Importance of large salmon, relative to grilse, for egg deposition objectives
- Difficulty to assess fishing mortality;
- Suggestions that a future management model should be subject to a review after 5 years;
- USR could be set at the level where indigenous FSC needs are met. But defining the needs is a challenge;
- Objective of recreational fishery is to maximize hookups, not harvest;
- If USR is too close to the LRP, it will be difficult to use the cautious zone as a buffer
- Flexibility is needed, as well as co-management with First Nations;
- First Nations have been making efforts in the last 15 years to reduce their harvest of large salmon, but these efforts don't seem to be recognized
- We need to find a way to help relations between users of the resource



## End of the meeting (October, 25)

Some participants supported the idea of a working group, with narrow timelines and objectives.

Participants and the Chair finally agree that instead of forming a working group, participants will be asked to submit their propositions by email before the Eastern New Brunswick Advisory committee meeting in December, where the discussion will continue.

To help participants formulating their input, these questions were sent by DFO by email:

**What should be the take of salmon in each of the different Precautionary Approach zones (Critical, Cautious and Healthy)? And what should be the Upper Stock Reference point, that is the point at which the stock can be considered healthy? (...)** your answer to this question shouldn't look at how that take (or harvest, or mortality) should be shared between users at this point. You reply can, however, go in more elaborate details than for just the three zones, i.e., especially for the cautious zone, where we expect that more than just one decision rule can apply, depending on how close the stock is to the healthy or the critical zone for example. Moreover, please provide an Upper Stock Reference point that you see fit for the fishery, feel free to base your feedback of the examples that was presented and discussed during the last meeting, also please provide the reasoning behind your input. As was also confirmed on October 25, we are asking this question in relation to the **Miramichi River system**.



## Stakeholder Input received (summary)

- Four stakeholder organizations provided input
- Some common grounds, but no consensus on some important aspects
- Request to receive proposals from DFO rather than open questions

### Upper Stock Reference recommendations (when provided)

- Recommendations for USR to be 2.5 x LRP – corresponds to higher range of examples provided by DFO, which provides a margin of confidence to say the stock is healthy. One organization did not provide a recommendation but agreed with the concept of setting USR somewhere in relation to Maximum Sustainable Yield.



## Stakeholder Input received (summary)

### Decision rules recommendations for critical, cautious and healthy zones (when provided)

- **Critical zone:** closure of fishing not supported when stock is in the critical zone (consensus among organizations that provided input). Mentions of socio-economic factors, and also of a connection between people and salmon, from which salmon can benefit in the long-term. Catch and release only in the critical zone supported by most. One organization recommends the continuation of a limited recreational grilse retention.
- **Cautious zone:** Organizations recommended a progressive grilse retention fishery, based on the stock status inside the cautious zone (different strategies depending on the level, i.e. lower half or upper half of the zone). But did not provide details on numbers, rather asked DFO to provide scenarios. Other considerations mentioned, like the need to factor in the capacity of tributaries with most public water to withstand elevated angling pressure; that a fishing strategy should ensure that grilse remain represented in the demographic composition of the populations, and that any fishing approach in the cautious zone must allow stock to grow towards the healthy zone.
- **Healthy zone:** recommendations go towards more recreational retention in that zone, but most respondents supported to not harvesting large salmon in the recreational fishery regardless of how healthy the stock is. Other comments were formulated regarding the need to avoid compromising a healthy situation by overharvesting.
- **Comments on indigenous fisheries**

Two organizations proactively offered more comments on indigenous fisheries. No consensus, but advice goes towards minimizing harvest of large salmon, especially in the critical zone.

Support for Indigenous priority of access expressed in stakeholder submissions, or in further feedback when comments were provided on this aspect.

**One question: In the critical zone, when a recreational fishery is taking place, how to make sure this fishery respects the Indigenous priority of access?**



## Next steps

- **Any other input to expect on the recreational fishery? (stakeholders / indigenous groups)**
- **Timing? Is DFO ready to draft a framework for the Atlantic salmon recreational fishery?**