

Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit www.islandtides.com to read the current edition and more find more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics in our extensive archive of newspapers and articles.

Reprint from Volume 22 Number 21

Nov 11, 2010

Past salmon studies inconclusive, says Cohen

An Interim Report, published by the Cohen Commission on Fraser River Sockeye Salmon, concludes that despite 'dozens' of studies and over 700 recommendations over the past 20 years, no useful conclusions can yet be drawn on the key questions surrounding the management, harvesting, and survival of the salmon runs.

The Report reviews some 22 previous studies since 1982, and their recommendations, by way of background to the Commission's hearings, which started at the end of October. Said Mr Justice Bruce Cohen, summarizing the results of these studies: 'An enormous amount of time and money has been invested in arriving at the recommendations contained in these previous reports, yet the decline in Fraser sockeye stocks continued through 2009.'

He went on to say that the massive 2010 return (an 'extraordinary rebound') just emphasized the need for the inquiry.

Issues To Be Investigated

The result of this review, however, has led the commission to create a list of issues to be investigated in its research and its hearings.

They are:

- Fraser sockeye life cycle;
- Conservation perspectives;
- Perspectives on Aboriginal law;
- DFO's organizational structure;
- The Pacific Salmon Commission;
- Wild Salmon Policy (Part 1);
- Overview of DFO habitat management and conservation;
- Harvest management;
- Harvesting;
- Enforcement (fisheries);
- Habitat enhancement and restoration;
- Wild Salmon Policy (Part 2);

- Protection of sockeye biodiversity;
- Watershed-based planning and marine coastal planning;
- Enforcement (habitat);
- Effects on habitat in the Fraser River watershed;
- Predation;
- Diseases, viruses, bacteria, and parasite;s
- Salmon farms;
- Effects on habitat in the marine environment;
- Population dynamics; and
- Other fisheries models

Justice Cohen specifically warned against reaching any conclusions from the interim report, saying that all the documents requested by the commission have not yet been received, his legal team are still conducting interviews of prospective witnesses, and information from the hearings, and the scientific research projects, has yet to come.

The Research Projects

The commission has contracted scientific research into the following questions:

- Project 1 –Diseases and parasites
- Project 2–Effects of contaminants on Fraser River sockeye salmon
- Project 3–Fraser River freshwater ecology and status of sockeye salmon Conservation Units
- Project 4–Marine ecology
- Project 5–Impacts of salmon farms on Fraser River sockeye salmon
- Project 6–Data synthesis and cumulative impact analysis
- Project 7–Fraser River sockeye fisheries and fisheries

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

This article was published (Nov 11, 2010) in 'Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 18,000 print copies throughout the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island from Victoria to Campbell River.

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com. Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>

management

Project 8—Effects of predators on Fraser River sockeye salmon

Project 9—Effects of climate change on Fraser River sockeye salmon, literature compilation and analysis

Project 10—Fraser River sockeye production dynamics, data compilation, literature review, and reporting

Project 11—Fraser River sockeye salmon, status of DFO science and management

Project 12—Sockeye habitat analysis in the Lower Fraser River and the Strait of Georgia

Commission Is Unique

Justice Cohen emphasized that this Commission is the 'first in three decades' to be held under the *Inquiries Act*, which enables it to examine witnesses under oath and require the production of specific evidence and documents.

It is the first commission, he says:

- that has specifically been tasked to identify the causes for the decline of Fraser River sockeye salmon and to make recommendations for the fishery's future sustainability;

- that has been specifically directed to investigate the fish biology and ecosystem issues that may have caused or

contributed to the decline, including a consideration of anthropogenic climate change; and

- that has been mandated to undertake a comprehensive consideration of DFO's past and present policies, practices, and procedures.

Finally, Justice Cohen expresses his optimism: 'I believe there is a common will to do what is necessary to conserve Fraser sockeye stocks, and I am cautiously optimistic that, with the co-operation of the participants, recommendations will be made to satisfy our mandate of improving the future sustainability of the fishery.'