

Progress Made in Sockeye Recovery Planning

More than 50 individuals attended an open house and several Sakinaw sockeye stakeholder sessions on the Sunshine Coast in November 2004. Organized by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC), these events were part of a series intended to help provide feedback from the public to teams working on BC salmon recovery projects. The draft Sakinaw sockeye recovery strategy was discussed in Sechelt and Pender Harbour, as well as at meetings in Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Cambell River, Port Hardy and Prince Rupert.

Participants at the Sunshine Coast meetings acknowledged that habitat loss and human use of Sakinaw Lake may be playing an important role in the population's decline. Recovery strategy recommendations included the monitoring of development around the lake, the continued captive breeding of Sakinaw sockeye and further research into predation, aquaculture and the impact of commercial salmon fisheries.

Detailed comments from the November 9 Pender Harbour stakeholder session are available at www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/consultation2004/meetingschedule_e.htm. A final report on the fall community dialogue sessions can be found at www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/consultation2004/main_e.htm. Both documents are downloadable in Word and PDF formats from the Fisheries and Oceans Canada website (for more information please see other side).

The Sakinaw Lake Recovery Team will meet again in February 2005. In addition, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) will organize a Stewardship Fair in Pender Harbour to explore methods of co-ordinating community



Sakinaw Lake on a clear winter day, facing northeast from the outlet, where a floating walkway leads to a path to the ocean. Daniel Bouman photo

stewardship efforts (see below and over). Local residents and landowners can do a great deal to improve and preserve habitat for the Sakinaw sockeye and increase awareness about its plight.

Count numbers are now available for Sakinaw Lake's beleaguered sockeye salmon for 2004. Ninety-nine adult sockeye salmon returned to the lake to spawn last year, up from a total of three in 2003. However, only 142 sockeye smolt (the name given to young salmon when they move from fresh water to salt) were counted leaving Sakinaw, far fewer than predicted. (Many smolt stay in the lake for two years rather than one.) Coho salmon also enter Sakinaw on their way to Mixal Lake and several streams, where they spawn. Adult coho numbers are believed to be low for 2004, but 13,931 coho smolt were counted leaving the lake.

Stewardship Fair

The SCCA and Pacific Salmon Foundation will co-sponsor a free Sakinaw Sockeye Stewardship Fair in Pender Harbour on February 26, 2005 with displays, speakers and an afternoon workshop on forming and running stewardship groups. Former SCRD director Lee Turnbull will act as facilitator. Other stewardship groups will be represented. Coffee and sandwiches will be provided for participants.

Here's the schedule for the fair:

10:45 a.m. Doors open. Free admission.

11:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. Speakers to include
• Sechelt First Nation representative •
SCRD director John Rees on water management • FOC community advisor Grant McBain on sockeye recovery • Fay Smith from the Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society.

1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Workshop on how to create a sockeye stewardship group.

**SAKINAW SOCKEYE
STEWARDSHIP FAIR
Saturday, Feb 26, 2005
10:45 am to 3:00 pm
PENDER HARBOUR
COMMUNITY CENTRE
(DOWNTOWN MADEIRA PARK)**

Thanks to the Habitat
Stewardship Program
(Environment Canada)
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What Community Stewardship Groups Can Do to Help

A community stewardship group is a body of volunteers committed to restoring or preserving a particular geographic location and the wildlife it supports. There are many examples of stewardship groups on the Sunshine Coast; volunteers are working to ensure the present and future health of Sargeant Bay, the Tetrahedron, the Caren Range, Ruby Lake, Ambrose Lake, Homesite Creek, Mount Elphinstone, the Sechelt Marsh and the Iris Griffith Marsh in Madeira Park. Now Sakinaw Lake and its endangered salmon are in need of a dedicated group to help protect the vitality of this important ecosystem.

The Sunshine Coast Conservation Association and Pacific Salmon Foundation can help in the creation of a community stewardship group. We hope that the Sakinaw Sockeye Stewardship Fair (see over for details) will be a starting point for this initiative. What can a group do? While every stewardship area has its own needs and opportunities, most volunteer efforts focus on three related issues: habitat restoration, harm reduction and public awareness. Let's look briefly at how these topics might relate to Sakinaw Lake (and at examples of similar stewardship programs elsewhere in the province).

Habitat restoration: There may be chances for a Sakinaw group—working in co-operation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada—to assist with the rehabilitation of salmon spawning and juvenile rearing areas. The lakes and creeks that run into Sakinaw and effect water quality in the larger lake may also benefit from volunteer restoration projects. The Sargeant Bay Society (SBS), for example, has created a beautiful, functioning wetland adjacent to the ocean. The Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society (MVIHES), based in Parksville, is involved in numerous projects on the Englishman River to prevent erosion, stabilize stream channels and create spawning and juvenile rearing habitat.

Impact reduction: Community groups can be especially effective in helping prevent further damage to a fragile ecosystem, either from pollution or from the degradation of wildlife habitat through construction or other development. A

stewardship group for Sakinaw lake could learn about, promote and apply wise gardening and lawn-care practices, “green” boating and building techniques, non-polluting methods of waste and contaminant disposal, and sustainable water usage. MVIHES, for instance, has a program for “salmon-friendly lawns,” with environmentally sound tips and solutions for watering, mowing, aerating, fertilizing and weeding. The group has created a brochure and a webpage on the subject, makes salmon-friendly lawn signs, and even tours an exhibit round local festivals.



Sakinaw Lake flows into Agamemnon Channel north of Pender Harbour via a short outlet stream. Andrew Scott photo

Public awareness: There are many activities that stewardship groups can engage in to help people learn more about the conservation issues facing the Sakinaw sockeye. Here are just a few examples used by other community groups, including SBS and MVIHES: information packages that assist waterfront landowners develop and maintain healthy lakeside habitats; similar packages that offer options for private land conservation and alternatives to lawns; land stewardship and streamkeeper workshops and courses, including ones for children; interpretive signs; “conservation tours” for residents and visitors; stewardship websites and DVDs; displays and presentations that can be taken to local fairs, with components for kids (a model of a watershed, for instance, or an educational crawl-through septic system toy!).

Sources & Contacts

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The draft recovery strategy for the Sakinaw Lake sockeye salmon is available at: http://www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/consultation2004/main_e.htm. This website also has other important background documents. Phone: Grant McBain, FOC Community Advisor, 604-883-2613.

Pacific Salmon Foundation

The website, www.psf.ca, describes the valuable programs that PSF operates or manages, including the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund, the Community Salmon Program and recovery plans for several critical BC salmon and steelhead areas.

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Check out the many local initiatives that this active non-profit group is sponsoring in the local region at www.thesc.ca. The SCCA is involved with private land conservation, drinking water protection, the preservation of wildlife habitat and more.

Living by Water Project

There's a wealth of advice about working toward healthier human and wildlife habitats along fresh and saltwater shorelines at www.livingbywater.ca, including comprehensive information about septic systems, docks, boating, co-existing with wildlife, preventing erosion, gardening with native plants, maintaining water quality, home purchasing and construction.

Land Trust Alliance of BC

You'll find descriptions of voluntary conservation options for private landowners at www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca, with detailed downloadable files about covenants, preserving natural and cultural features, ecogifts, and tax implications and benefits.

Sargeant Bay Society

The website of this pre-eminent Sunshine Coast stewardship group, www.sargbay.ca, will give interested volunteers an inspired feeling for what can be accomplished.

Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society

Loads of ideas for community stewardship projects can be found on this society's website at www.mvihes.bc.ca/.