Policy For Fraser River Panel Authorized Fraser Sockeye and Pink Salmon Test Fisheries

Scope: This policy shall guide implementation of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon test fisheries conducted by the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC), acting through its Fraser River Panel and PSC staff.

Authority and Responsibility: This authority of the PSC to conduct test fisheries and the delineation of responsibilities of the PSC and the Parties to the Pacific Salmon Treaty in the conduct of such fisheries is derived from the following:

> **Diplomatic Note of August 13, 1985 Pacific Salmon Treaty, Part A. paragraph 1,** *The Fraser River Panel established pursuant to the Treaty shall assume the following*
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> *responsibilities consistent with the Treaty; section c) conduct test fishing on Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon;*
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> **Article II, paragraph 13, Pacific Salmon Treaty,** *The Commission shall authorize the disbursement of funds contributed by the Parties pursuant to paragraph 12, and may enter into contracts and acquire property necessary for the performance of its functions.*
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> **Exchange of Diplomatic Notes (June 30, 1999) Pacific Salmon Treaty, paragraph 7,** *Each Government shall take the necessary steps to implement the obligations under this Agreement consistent with its national laws.*

Understanding:

In consultation with the Fraser River Panel, staff of the PSC will carry out Fraser River Panel approved test fisheries for the purposes of fishery management and conservation of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. The test fishing program will be carried out in Fraser River Panel Area Waters as defined in Annex II of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, and in other areas (non-Fraser River Panel Areas) if requested by the Fraser River Panel. The removal of fish for assessment, sampling and other purposes, must be done consistently with the regulations of the jurisdiction within which the fish removals will occur.

Purpose and Definition:

The purpose of the test fishing program is to collect physical, biological and, catch per unit effort information which is used to provide estimates of run size and other stock assessment data for key stock components of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon runs. These data, in conjunction with information from other programs of the PSC, will be used to assist the Fraser River Panel to achieve its hierarchy of objectives as specified in paragraph 10, Chapter 4, Annex IV of the Treaty: "(a) obtain spawning escapement goals by stock or stock groupings; (b) meet Treaty defined international allocation; and (c) achieve domestic objectives" for Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. Panel approved test fisheries will provide in-season information for stock assessment (stock composition, abundance, diversion rate, by-catch and migration timing). This information will be used to determine progress towards escapement goals, allowable harvest levels, and will identify potential directed fishing opportunities.

The treatment and accounting of test fishing catches with respect to TAC is specified in paragraph 3, Chapter 4, Annex IV of the Treaty.

Panel approved test fisheries are small scale fishing programs, usually including 1-2 vessels operating in identified areas. These vessels operate fishing gear in a defined and consistent pattern designed, coordinated and administered by PSC staff in consultation with government agencies, fishing representatives from user-groups, and members of the Fraser River Panel and its technical committee as required.

Key Elements of Test fishing Operations:

1. Test fisheries will be operated in a consistent manner to obtain the necessary catch per unit effort and biological information (refer to Appendix A for criteria) for management and conservation of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. Consistency in operation is vital to preserve the integrity of the long term database.

2. Commercial and other authorized fisheries will be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with the proper operation of Panel approved test fisheries and the collection of consistent data.

3. Staff of the PSC, in consultation with the Fraser River Panel Technical Committee and management agencies as required, will design a test fishing program and provide a test fishing schedule to the Fraser River Panel for their review and approval.

4. The Executive Secretary will provide to the Finance and Administration Committee budget plans for their review.

5. PSC staff and management agencies as required will have the responsibility to implement the test fishing program.

6. Test fishing vessels and operators will be contracted by the Executive Secretary to undertake Fraser River Panel approved test fishing operations. Termination within a season shall be at the discretion of the Executive Secretary.

7. Test fishers will be selected according to their experience with the gear and area of the test fishery. Preferred candidates must have sufficient experience as vessel captain. Candidates, who have previous experience in research charters, where they have shown a willingness to conform to guidelines and direction, may receive a higher ranking. References from research agencies and the respect of industry representatives and peers will be considered. The vessel and gear are suitable for the test fishery and the vessel conforms to each countries standard of safety and stability. The fisher has the ability to provide personal observations of activities and conditions during the test fishing period. The value for services rendered is also considered in the selection process.

8. Contracts with test fishing vessel operators to deliver test fishing activities shall be developed and will detail the responsibilities of the contracting parties. Test fishing activities shall commence only after contracts have been signed and exchanged and would be valid for one fishing season. The Executive Secretary will sign on behalf of the PSC.

9. All data collection activities undertaken in Canadian waters will be licensed by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans under section 52 of the *Fishery General Regulations*.

10. For test fishing activities undertaken in Canadian waters, all fish that are not required for scientific purposes will be returned alive to the water where there is a reasonable expectation of their survival. Fish that are unavoidably killed as a result of the test activity, or cannot be returned alive to the water with a reasonable expectation of survival, may be retained and disposed of by the [Section 52] license holder.

11. For test fishing activities undertaken in U.S. waters, any fish captured and retained in the test fishing program become the property of the PSC.

12. The test fishery will follow an operational plan that describes the requirements for data collection and reporting, as well as the test fishing locations, fishing times and frequency and fishing gear required.

13. PSC staff will review the analysis of test fishing data with the Fraser River Panel and its Technical Committee as required in-season.

14. Additional post season review and assessment of the test fishing program will be provided to the Fraser River Panel and its Technical Committee as requested by the Fraser River Panel with respect to the criteria in Appendix A.

Appendix A

Test fisheries will be considered and may be approved by the Fraser River Panel when the test fishery can provide useful and reliable information that will contribute to one or more of the following objectives:

1. Provide salmon catch and effort information for analysis of stock or stock group run timing [and abundance].
2. Estimate of diversion rates for integration into abundance estimation or other assessment models.
3. Provide species composition (salmon catch) information to be used for proportioning daily estimates of passage from the Hydroacoustics Program into migration by salmon species.
4. Provide information on stock composition and age-at-return, including DNA, sex, length and scales.
5. Provide other biological information as required, including fish health, endocrinology, physiology and radio tagging of salmon.
6. Provide a platform for the collection of oceanographic and limnological information, including physical, chemical, weather and other pertinent information as required.
7. Provide data to assess by-catch impacts on other species or stocks.