



Fraser River Peacemakers

Good fishing includes good manners, say Fraser River Peacemakers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ABBOTSFORD, BC – With the main 2017 fishing season on the Lower Fraser just around the bend, the Fraser River Peacemakers urge all those who head out on the water to avoid conflict with good etiquette and sportsmanship.

Their message: be respectful of other fishers on the river and make accommodations as necessary. Pay attention to your surroundings, and communicate clearly with other people on the river.

Currently, there is a catch and release sport fishery for white sturgeon on the Fraser River, seven days a week, from dawn till dusk. Sport fishing for salmon species is expected to open in August or later, when thousands of anglers may be out in boats or on the river bars, islands or banks.

For First Nations, there will be a limited food, social and ceremonial (FSC) fishery for Chinook salmon, expected to open in June and July. FSC opportunities for other species will follow later in the summer and fall.

Designated First Nations from the region are authorized to fish with set nets (stationary nets) or drifted gill nets for FSC salmon, for a limited number of hours on specific days and areas, as agreed upon with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The FSC openings give First Nations a chance to catch salmon for ceremonial purposes and to share with their communities.

To avoid conflicts and tangled gear, anglers are asked to move their lines while the drift nets go by, or while the First Nations cast their nets. First Nations are asked to alert anglers they might encounter in the area. The protocol is demonstrated in the FRP video, *River Manners*, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbyYW9cerxA&feature=youtu.be

“Fraser River Peacemakers members will be visiting launch sites to speak with aboriginal and non-aboriginal fishers in the coming weeks, to encourage them to exercise courtesy to one another while fishing is under way,” said Ernie Crey, Peacemakers chair and chief of Cheam First Nation. “Doing so ensures the fishery is well-managed, and all fishers are respected and remain safe.”

The Fraser River Peacemakers was initiated in 2009 after violent confrontation compelled sport fishing and First Nations leaders to work together to prevent conflicts on the Fraser River, with education and a conflict resolution mandate. Since then, the volunteer-run Peacemakers formed a non-profit society that is unique in its work to promote a practise of safety, stewardship and good relations between two cultures on the river.

For their efforts, in November the Peacemakers received an esteemed 2017 National Recreational Fisheries Award from the Minister of Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Dominic Leblanc, for its exemplary leadership in building positive relations between First Nations harvesters and recreational anglers.

Anglers should note that at times, DFO announces openings on short notice. For the most current information on FSC and recreational opening dates and locations, see the DFO website at:



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- www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/fraser/index-eng.html
- For more on the Fraser River Peacemakers, see: www.fraserriverpeacemakers.ca
- To report fisheries violations and polluters, contact the RAPP (Report All Poachers & Polluters) hotline at forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/, at **1-877-952-7277 (RAPP)**, or on mobile phones at **#7277**
- For white sturgeon catch and release guidelines, see www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/docs/ws_guidelines.pdf
- Spot illegal fishing? Call DFO – Observe, Record, Report : 1-800-465-4336
- Report violent or potentially violent situations to the RCMP at 9-1-1

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Quotes:

"Safe respectful fisheries are the responsibility of all sectors if we are to preserve the Fraser River fishery for our respective future generations. Recreational anglers must demonstrate tolerance in respecting sanctioned First Nations fisheries and provide access for these fishers. Reciprocal respect is warranted and leaders within both communities are actively seeking solutions to conflict through the Peacemakers' process." – **Rod Clapton**, Peacemakers Conflict Committee Co-chair, President of the B.C. Federation of Drift Fishers

Backgrounder:

Fraser River Peacemakers is a collaborative group of Lower Fraser First Nations and recreational sport fishing interests who together seek ways to get along on the river.

Its creation came about after a serious violent incident during the 2009 summer salmon season, an event that demonstrated the deteriorating situation on the Fraser between competing interests in the Lower Fraser fishery. The initial informal discussions between the various fishing interests lead to the creation of a joint working group of the fishing participants and others – eventually called the Fraser River Peacemakers – who have met consistently over the past several years.

Their main role is to act as conflict resolution agents in disagreements on the Fraser, to educate the fishing community and to encourage harmonious, respectful relationships on the river.

The FRP has marked several milestones including establishing their River Manners program, educational signs, safety promotion, and raising awareness about fishery monitoring and catch reporting. Participants currently include representatives from major sport fishing organizations, First Nations and the Lower Fraser Fisheries



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Alliance. DFO and other agencies have attended and provided support in various ways to the group. See also www.fraserriverpeacemakers.ca

First Nations fisheries:

- Early-timed Chinook are critically important to annual First Salmon Ceremonies and food for each Lower Fraser First Nation. These ceremonies have been conducted by LFFNs for centuries and honour the first salmon. This honouring acknowledges and respects the first salmon that return after winter, and for providing sustenance to the People of the River.
- Section 35.1 of the *Constitution Act* stipulates priority fishery management and access as follows: 1) Conservation 2) First Nations 3) Sports/Recreational Sector 4) Commercial Sector. (A caveat to this general order of priority is that for Chinook and coho the recreational fishery has priority over commercial.)
- The constitutionally supported FSC fishery permits designated First Nations limited access to eulachon and salmon species through the fishing season. DFO sets the dates and times based on fish stock estimates. See more background at www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/aboriginal-autochtones/afs-srapa-eng.htm
- Due to the decline in Chinook, sockeye, coho and other species, First Nations are not as 'visible' on the water as in the past. In the past five decades, First Nation fisheries have gone from 3 days a week to fisheries windows of hours annually. Conversely, the recreational fishery has access to sturgeon fishing year round and daily.
- Since sport fishing occurs daily on the Lower Fraser from the Fraser Canyon (i.e. Sawmill Creek) all the way to the river delta, there are ongoing opportunities for recreational anglers to encounter aboriginal fishers. It is therefore important for all fishers to be aware of when and where they may intersect with other user groups. For instance, the Mission/Ridgedale river area is convenient to sturgeon and other anglers due to the proximity of the Mission boat launch. At times, there is heavy vessel activity in this region that may result in challenges, particularly for those who are not familiar with the nearby First Nation fishery sites and methods. To avoid conflict, the Peacemakers encourage fishers to make these encounters an opportunity for learning, courteous behaviour and amicable sharing of the Fraser's resources.