



Hupacasath First Nation practices sustainability, enhancement and restoration while still providing sockeye for membership

June 15th, 2017 - UNCEDED HUPACASATH TERRITORY

PORT ALBERNI - Hupacasath First Nation's priority has always been the preservation and protection of all natural resources in our traditional territory and so working with the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Canada (DFO) to close harvesting Area 23/Somass River sockeye based on of the pre-season forecast of 170,000 fish is responsible resource management. Ensuring Food fish for the Hupacasath Members is also responsible management.

Working closely with DFO, Hupacasath has run escapement and fishery management programs on the Somass, Stamp, Sproat and several other systems for over 30 years. Hupacasath Fisheries Manager/Biologist Graham Murrell and a skilled, accomplished fisheries team keep a close eye on the salmon as they return to the spawning grounds in Sproat and Great Central Lakes. Hupacasath Fisheries Technicians are contracted by DFO to collect bio-samples from each system to assess stocks, determine the age composition, male/female ratio and lengths. As per an agreement with DFO, these fish are distributed to Hupacasath elders living in the community. This agreement has spanned over 30 years as part of the access requirements necessary to run a successful program.

In addition to the assessment program at the fish ladders, salmon abundance is also estimated by a Test Fishery program. The Area 23 Test Fishery harvests an agreed number of fish annually to finance the program costs. The Test Fishery contract requires hiring a Test Boat and crew which are agreed to by the Area 23 Roundtable and DFO. Pay Fish purchased from the Test Boat to finance the Test Fishery follows a set bidding process including invitation all commercial buyers and fish companies to submit sealed bids to be opened on a set date and time in the presence with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Tseshaht and Hupacasath First Nations. This year Tsuma-as Seafoods LP, a 100% owned and operated Hupacasath Company, was the highest bidder. Hupacasath Council felt the Test Boat Fish presented an excellent opportunity to provide fish for their community in a year of likely scarcity while ensuing the least number of fish were needed to be taken by the Test Boat to pay for the required Test Boat contract payment, - a win-win. Chief Councillor Steven Tatoosh commented "We are proud to support our community, provide food fish for our members and protect our resources through a variety of innovative opportunities!"

Hupacasath is also administering a salmon habitat restoration program which aims to restore the many inflow tributaries on Great Central Lake. The first project at Scout Beach and Stream 10 intends to restore spawning habitat and create overwintering habitat for several species of salmon. This project will incorporate an educational aspect that will engage Hupacasath youth in the monitoring and protection of salmon habitat. On the ground work is due to start in August and will continue into the fall. This project is funded in part by the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program.

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