

The Yukon River Panel

R&E Fund

Priorities Plan



April 2018

Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Yukon River Salmon Agreement
3. The R&E Fund
4. Administration
5. The project Selection Toolbox
6. The Table of Priorities
 - Restoration
 - Conservation
 - Enhancement
 - Stewardship
 - Communications
 - Viable Fisheries
7. Appendix

Introduction

The Yukon River Panel uses a number of tools to allocate annual R&E Fund monies to achieve the Panel's R&E goals with respect to restoration, conservation and enhancement of Canadian-origin salmon stocks, as well as the stewardship of salmon habitat and resources and, maintaining viable fisheries in the Yukon River in Canada.

As one of the tools in the toolbox, this Priorities Plan provides an inventory of priority activities among which the Panel can select and choose to place emphasis upon, to direct the allocation of R&E Fund monies between competing proposals. This is accomplished annually, at the pre-season meeting of the Yukon River Panel, when the Panel develops a list of priority activities known as the "Near-Term Priorities" to be the focus of the R&E Fund Call for Proposals for projects to be implemented the following year. The Panel will select its annual Near-Term priorities from the lists of eligible activities provided in this Priorities Plan.

An earlier version of this Priorities Plan (known as the Budget Priorities Framework) was first developed in 2003 and established the basic framework of activities eligible for R&E Fund support that is still used today. Over the years, the Plan has been periodically updated and improved. In this latest version, updated in 2017, the emphasis has been on utility - simplifying the content, focusing on the most pressing priorities and crafting a practical up-to-date tool for the Panel's use.

A significant change is the establishment of a fixed life-cycle for the Plan. Based on one full generational cycle of Yukon River Chinook salmon, the Plan has a 6-year renewable time horizon. Mid-term priorities should be achievable within this period. Long-term priorities are those that will take longer than 6 years to accomplish.



The Yukon River Salmon Agreement

The Yukon River Salmon Agreement was officially recognized as an annex of the Pacific Salmon Treaty in 2002. The Agreement establishes that the R&E Fund shall be used for the following purposes:

- Restoration, conservation and enhancement programs and projects consistent with the protection of existing wild salmon stocks and the habitats on which they depend.
- Given the wild nature of the Yukon River and its salmon stocks, and the substantial risks associated with large-scale enhancement through artificial propagation, such enhancement activities are inappropriate at this time.
- Artificial propagation shall not be used as a substitute for effective fishery regulation, stock and habitat management or protection.
- The priorities for implementing programs and projects using monies disbursed from the R&E Fund shall be in this order:
 - i. Restoring habitat and wild stocks;
 - ii. Conserving habitat and wild stocks;
 - iii. Enhancing habitat; and
 - iv. Enhancing wild stocks.
- Encouraging habitat stewardship, conservation and reclamation in activities and industries that impact salmon and their habitats in Canada; and
- Maintaining viable salmon fisheries in the Yukon River in Canada, thus establishing incentives for the conservation and stewardship of salmon and their habitats. Funding for commercial salmon fishing and processing shall be limited to the development of infrastructure, capital equipment expenditures and, in years when no commercial processing occurs, the maintenance of processing infrastructure.

The R&E Fund

The appropriation granted to the R&E Fund of \$U.S. 1.2 million, is provided annually by the U.S. Congress. According to the Yukon River Salmon Agreement, up to 50% of the available funds can be disbursed directly by the Canadian section of the Yukon River Panel on Canadian programs and projects. These programs and projects are approved by the Canadian section of the Panel in consultation with the full Panel and are consistent with the principals and guidelines of the R&E Fund. The full Yukon River Panel decides how the remaining portion of the R&E Fund shall be allocated for programs and projects occurring either in Alaska or the Yukon Territory.

Administration








In May 2016 the Panel retained the services of the Pacific Salmon Commission Secretariat for a second three-year term to provide effective and appropriate administration of all R&E Fund program activities and expenditures. An annual budget for administration is prepared by the PSC and reviewed and approved by the Panel. The cost of R&E Fund administration is drawn from the annual allocation of \$1.2M US.

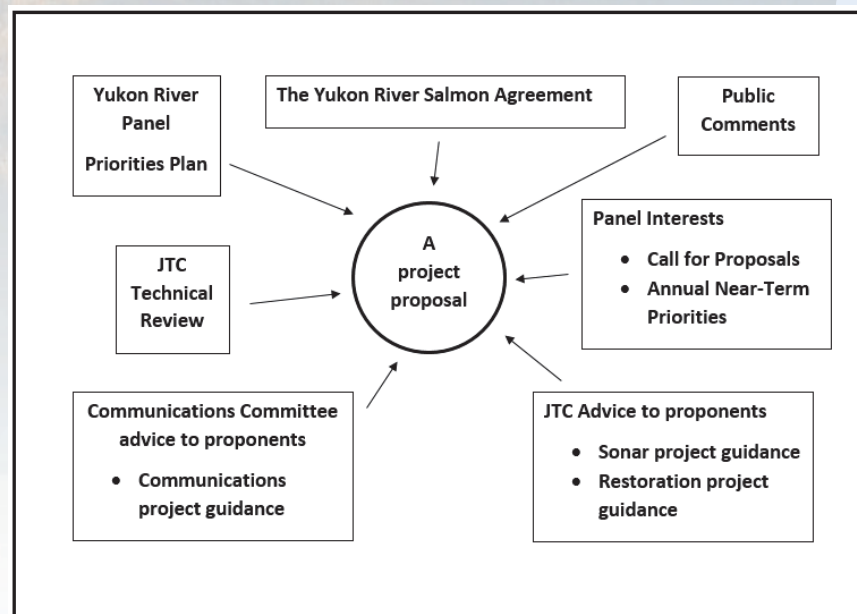
Administrative services provided by the PSC Secretariat to the Panel include:

- Organizational matters involved in the annual Call for Proposals and subsequent project review and selection processes.
- All contractual and financial matters pertaining to the implementation and management of annual R&E Fund projects.
- Developing and maintaining a filing system for the Panel's records.
- Recording and developing a record of discussions in the form "minutes" for Yukon River Panel Public and Closed sessions
- Maintaining the Yukon River Panel's website and updating with new material as appropriate.

The Project Selection Toolbox

The Yukon River Panel uses all the tools in the toolbox below to review a proposal and select a project for funding with a grant from the R&E Fund.

-  **The Yukon River Salmon Agreement.** Sets out the founding principles and guidelines for the R&E Fund.
-  **Yukon River Panel Priorities Plan.** The Panel may decide a funding priority or priorities for any given year, based on this framework.
-  **Panel Interests.** The Panel can further elaborate on specific interests in its annual Call for Proposals. Panel members each bring their own perspectives and personal expertise to the table during the review process.
-  **JTC Technical Review.** The JTC is responsible for reviewing and evaluating proposals submitted to the R&E Fund for their technical merit.
-  **Public Comments.** The public are invited to review and comment on all proposed projects. Their input is considered by the Panel along with the JTC evaluation.
-  **The JTC** has developed helpful guidance for proposal writing to assist anyone planning to develop a sonar or restoration project proposal.
-  **The Communications Committee** has developed helpful guidance for proposal writing to assist anyone planning to develop a communications project proposal.



The Table of Priorities

The Yukon River Panel has developed a list of 40 mid-term and long-term priority activities towards which the Panel may direct R&E Fund grant awards in support of programs, projects and associated research and management activities on either side of the Alaska-Yukon border.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Sub-category</u>	<u>Mid-term Priorities</u>	<u>Long-term Priorities</u>
RESTORATION	Stocks	5	1
	Habitat	7	
CONSERVATION	Stocks	8	4
	Habitat	2	1
ENHANCEMENT	Stocks	1	
	Habitat	4	
STEWARDSHIP	Education	2	
	Culture	1	
COMMUNICATIONS	Outreach & Information Sharing	2	
VIABLE FISHERIES		1	

Mid-Term Priorities — refers to projects having planning, implementation and completion horizons of up to a maximum of 6 years long in total—equivalent to one full Chinook salmon life-cycle.

Long-Term Priorities — refers to projects that may take years to achieve their goals. The Panel recognizes that such long-duration projects may address critical priorities for the Panel without being urgently time-sensitive.

RESTORATION

Stocks

Goal: Identify and, when feasible and appropriate restore, depleted or extirpated wild Canadian-origin salmon stocks in the Yukon River drainage.

Mid-term Priorities.

1. Identify depleted stocks or limits to production (e.g. based on information about historic levels, traditional ecological knowledge, conservation concerns, or habitat “bottle-necks”) & identify candidates for stock restoration.
2. Assess feasibility of and prepare plan for restoring depleted stocks.
3. Restore depleted stocks.
4. Evaluate effects and success of restoration efforts.
5. Develop and test stock restoration techniques.

Long-term Priorities.

6. Conduct emergency response projects (e.g. harvest displacement, etc).



Habitat

Goal: Maintain wild salmon stock productivity in the Yukon River drainage through ensuring salmon access to spawning and rearing habitat and restoration of degraded habitat.

Mid-term Priorities.

7. Restore fish access to spawning and rearing habitat.
8. Identify potential spawning and rearing habitat restoration sites.
9. Assess feasibility and prepare plan for habitat restoration.
10. Restore and/or improve quality of spawning and rearing habitat.
11. Evaluate effects and success of restoration efforts.
12. Community development of individual watershed-based restoration plans.
13. Develop and test habitat restoration techniques.

CONSERVATION

Stocks

Goal: Provide for continued viability by developing improved information for in-season and long-term salmon management in the Yukon River drainage, including better stock assessment, data acquisition (including harvest monitoring and quality of escapement) and, improved understanding of factors affecting salmon production and harvest.

Mid-term Priorities.

14. Improve in-season and post-season resolution of genetic stock identification for Yukon River salmon.
15. Continue in-season border passage estimates.
16. Improve in-season stock specific run-size estimates, assessment methodology and analysis of spatial and temporal aspects of salmon migration at the mouth of the Yukon River.
17. Assess and understand the impacts of fishing techniques.
18. Investigate stock specific harvest strategies.
19. Community-based management planning.
20. Obtain information on the quality of escapement (e.g. age/size/sex/health).
21. Identify and monitor escapements to key salmon spawning streams/area (e.g. index streams).



Long-term Priorities.

22. Obtain in-season stock specific harvest estimates for Canadian and U.S. run components.
23. Investigate and establish levels of confidence in subsistence harvest estimates.
24. Develop scientifically-based escapement objectives for Canadian-origin salmon.
25. Document factors affecting survival, health and mortality at all life stages (production).



Habitat

Goal: Assess and document salmon habitat in the Yukon River drainage to improve understanding of salmon habitats.

Mid-term Priorities.

26. Locate and document spawning and rearing habitat.
27. Characterize habitats used by different life stages of salmon.

Long-term Priorities.

28. Environmental monitoring, particularly of key index streams.
29. Examine linkage of disease, parasites and contaminants to freshwater habitats.

ENHANCEMENT

Stocks

Goal: Identify and, when feasible and appropriate, establish new Yukon River Canadian-origin salmon stocks in the Yukon River drainage. Salmon stock enhancement projects will be limited to use of wild Yukon River Canadian-origin broodstock.

Mid-term Priorities.

30. Community development of individual watershed-based enhancement plans.

Habitat

Goal: Increase Yukon River Canadian-origin salmon stock production through creation of improved habitat.

Mid-term Priorities.

31. Research and investigate habitats suitable for salmon range extension in existing systems, or that would benefit from habitat enhancement to expand wild stock productivity.
32. Assess feasibility and prepare plan for habitat enhancement.
33. Conduct habitat enhancement projects.
34. Evaluate effects and success of habitat enhancement projects.



STEWARDSHIP

Education

Goals: Through stewardship projects, education and participation:

- (i) Increase capacity to protect, maintain and restore salmon stocks and habitat.
- (ii) Build a public constituency that is motivated to maintain and protect salmon stocks and habitat.
- (iii) Enable increased understanding of the ecological, social and economic importance of salmon.

Mid-term Priorities.

35. Involve and educate users and non-users in communities to increase their desire to maintain and protect salmon stocks and habitat.
36. Technical capacity building in communities.

Culture

Goal: Provide for enhanced cultural connections to salmon.

Mid-term Priorities.

37. Facilitate traditional or local knowledge research to document information on salmon and their habitats.



COMMUNICATIONS

Outreach & Information Sharing

Goals:

- (i) **Build and maintain public support for long term conservation and viability of salmon stocks, salmon habitat and the viability of salmon fisheries.**
- (ii) **Expand understanding of and foster management cooperation throughout Yukon River communities.**
- (iii) **Promote international awareness of Yukon River salmon stocks.**

Mid-term Priorities.

- 38. Conduct public outreach and education projects for people who fish on the river, youth, communities and the public to increase their desire to maintain and protect salmon stocks and habitat.
- 39. Conduct outreach projects that promote the integration of scientific and traditional knowledge.

VIABLE FISHERIES

Goal: Maintain viable Canadian salmon fisheries (subsistence, recreational, commercial and domestic); and, encourage participation and continuing interest of youth in salmon fisheries.

Mid-term Priorities.

- 40. Maximize the value of the Canadian harvest to make fisheries viable.

APPENDIX

Harvest displacement:

A project or initiative implemented on a given year in order to reduce or eliminate the harvest a species or stock of salmon to allow as many individual fish of that species or stock to migrate through fishery areas and reach their spawning grounds, while providing alternative sources of fish or fish products to fishers. A harvest displacement project or initiative would only be considered in exceptional circumstances. It does not allow for the provision of direct financial compensation to fishers for lost opportunities.

Extirpated stocks:

A genetically unique or distinct population of salmon which existed within a defined geographic area but is no longer present within the geographic area it previously occupied.

Quality of escapement:

Refers to various metrics or characteristics of individual salmon which comprise the salmon that return (i.e. “escape”) to their spawning grounds. Metrics or characteristics can include genetics, sex, fecundity (generally associated with size) or age.

Watershed-based restoration plan:


A description of an objective(s) and associated components intended to achieve a specific outcome pertaining to the abundance or distribution of a species of salmon or stock or pertaining to the quantity, availability or quality of habitat which supports a species of salmon or stock within a given geographic area (i.e. watershed).

Range extension:

The implementation of human-induced works or undertakings, or a natural event, which enables a species of salmon to access physical areas (i.e. habitats) which are or were not accessible to that species of salmon. Range extension pertains to specific physical areas (i.e. habitats) where there is no documented recent or historical salmon presence. Barriers to salmon in the context of “range extension” refer to natural physical barrier(s), as opposed to human-created structures.

Range recovery:

The implementation of human-induced works or undertakings, or a natural event, which enables a species of salmon to access physical areas (i.e. habitats) which were previously accessible to that species of salmon. Range recovery pertains to specific physical areas (i.e. habitats) where there is documented recent or historical salmon presence but due to physical barriers (either human-induced or resulting from a natural event(s)) are not currently accessible to that species of salmon.



Subsistence fishery:

A fishery that allows for the harvest of salmon for customary and traditional use purposes, typically by the family or relatives of the individual who carries out the harvesting. A subsistence fishery is defined and administered by the specific jurisdiction within which it occurs. It does not include a fishery which is administered for commercial, sport / recreational or domestic purposes.

Domestic fishery:

A Canadian limited entry fishery that allows for qualified, non-indigenous Canadian citizens who are also Yukon Territory residents that reside permanently in an isolated location to harvest salmon for personal use purposes. The creation of new or additional domestic licenses was suspended in the early 1980's, with existing licenses being maintained under "grandfather" provisions. The domestic fishery may only occur during commercial fishery periods.

Traditional knowledge:

Is cumulative knowledge gathered over generations and encompasses regional, local and spiritual connections to ecosystems and all forms of plant and animal life. It is commonly considered to refer to the complex bodies and systems of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations which are maintained and developed by local or indigenous communities through history. Understanding of traditional knowledge and approaches on traditional knowledge require recognition of a holistic and comprehensive perspective.



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