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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Skeena Salmon Habitat Conference addresses Pacific Salmon Forum recommendations

The Skeena Salmon Habitat Conference, the first of its kind to bring together a diverse group of experts and stakeholders in the Skeena Watershed, heard an urgent call for a new system to manage the province's salmon watersheds.

The conference, which took place Sept. 15 and 16 in Smithers, B.C. and was hosted by the Bulkley Valley Research Centre (BVRC), attracted over 100 participants to discuss the health of this ecologically and culturally important ecosystem.

Recommendations from the Pacific Salmon Forum for a new watershed governance system to ensure the future of BC's wild salmon and their habitat were discussed at the conference. John Fraser, Pacific Salmon Forum chair and a conference speaker, said he was encouraged by the event's broad representation.

"I thought it was very encouraging that we had people from both the provincial and federal governments there. A tremendous amount of credit has got to go to the BVRC for putting this on," Fraser said. "If we're going to save the salmon, the steelhead and the habitat and counteract the potential impacts of climate change and global warming, there has got to be the closest cooperation between the federal and provincial governments."

At the request of Premier Gordon Campbell, the Pacific Salmon Forum spent three years and \$5 million in provincial funding developing recommendations to guide provincial watershed management. Despite being released in February, the recommendations have received little response from the province, Fraser said. The forum's final report can be found at <http://www.pacificsalmonforum.ca/final/index.php>.

With sockeye returns for the Skeena River at roughly half their projected numbers, the Skeena Salmon Habitat Conference presented a unique opportunity for timely discussion about cumulative impacts to one of the province's most important watersheds.

"We are most pleased with the level of participation from various agencies and communities," BVRC research manager Rick Budhwa said. "We look forward to helping facilitate ongoing networking and research to look at the Skeena as a pilot for the forum's recommendations."

Chaired by Brian Riddell, president and CEO of the Pacific Salmon Foundation, conference speakers also included Jon O'Riordan, with the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia, and Jack Stanford, with the Flathead Lake Biological Station at the University of Montana.

The Bulkley Valley Research Centre is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve natural and cultural resource management through high quality research. In 2007-2008, the centre completed nearly 30 research projects that add to the scientific knowledge base in British Columbia.

Please see attached photo and John Fraser bio below. For more information, please call (250) 847-2827 or email amanda.follett@bvcentre.ca.