Uu-a-thluk
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New funding opportunity opens doors for Nuu-chah-nulth fisheries departments

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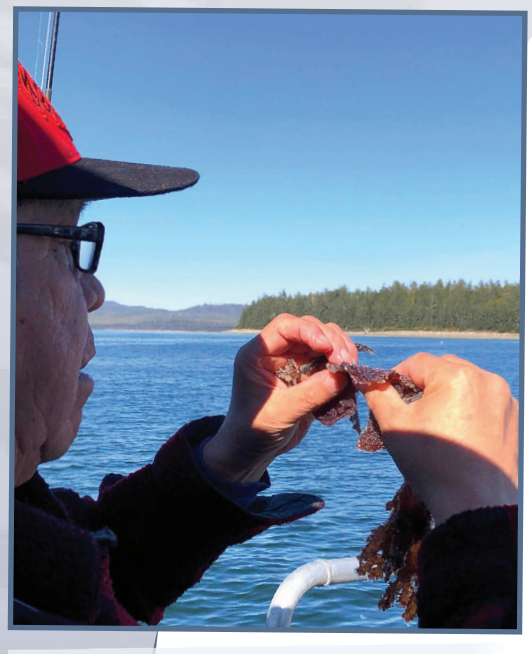

Hesquiaht Fisheries' Rufus Charleson examines spawn-on-kelp during a herring survey in Hesquiaht Harbour. Preparing for Charleson's impending retirement is one of the ways Hesquiaht will utilize RMOT funding.

Nuu-chah-nulth Nation fisheries programs that receive funding from DFO's Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS) are tapping into a new funding opportunity that will bolster the nations' fisheries management capabilities.

According to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), the new Resource Management Officer Technician (RMOT) initiative aims to strengthen nations' monitoring skills, "through standardized training and sharing of operational tools, practices and networking, and enhance monitoring capacity by expanding the number of RMOTs."

Monitoring capacity will be increased through DFO's investment in new fisheries initiatives where there are currently no monitors (and there is a conservation need), and in existing projects where RMOT-type positions are already involved. The Department will also fund projects that involve multiple communities or nations coming together to establish a collaborative monitoring network.

Nation proposals to the RMOT initiative are being assessed against several criteria which include capacity need.

"I've been struggling capacity-wise for quite some time," said Dave Miller of Ehattesaht/Chinehkint's fisheries department.

"I've been doing a lot of hard groundwork on my own, working individually through the (AFS) work plan and not really having anybody else there with me to gather data."

Miller is working with Danielle Robertson, Uu-a-thluk's Northern Region Biologist, on the final stages of an approved three-year proposal that will see Miller's work plan and a new RMOT work plan intertwined to meet the nation's monitoring needs.

"Some of the duties the new technician will be carrying out will include habitat monitoring, stream surveying, monitoring of community harvests in our territory, herring surveys, Dungeness crab surveys, clam and oyster surveys, some microtrolling and a little bit of work assisting with the Zeballos hatchery," said Miller.

In addition to monitoring efforts, Miller pointed out that the new RMOT will receive relevant training, such as swiftwater rescue and marine basic first aid, and will work within Ehattesaht/Chinehkint's community to build relationships with fishers.

In the Central Nuu-chah-nulth Region, Hesquiaht First Nation has also submitted a proposal to the RMOT initiative.

Rufus Charleson, Senior Fisheries Technician, along with Fisheries Biologists Candace Picco and Jared Dick (of Ha'oom Fisheries Society and Uu-a-thluk respectively), developed a proposal that aims to mitigate the lack of capacity and succession planning in the Hesquiaht Fisheries Department.

The nation hopes to address the long-standing gap in fisheries capacity in Hot Springs Cove by hiring 1.5 RMOTs (which they have been approved for) and securing a fisheries manager and replacement for Charleson who has been in his role for over 20 years and is ready to retire.

Hesquiaht's long-term conservation goals are to rebuild salmon habitat and populations and monitor catch rates in fisheries. The increase in monitoring and data collecting brought on by the addition of the RMOTs will bring the nation closer to those goals.

The nation will also initiate a Clam Gardens project in Hesquiaht Harbour, with the help of the new RMOT staff.

Ditidaht First Nation, in the Southern Nuu-chah-nulth Region, is putting final additions on a proposal to the RMOT initiative.

Together with Mike Wright of M.C. Wright and Associates and Uu-a-thluk's Sabrina Crowley, the nation's fisheries department is working on a proposal geared at increasing its capacity to enumerate migrating adult Hobiton River **bi?aa**t (sockeye salmon).

Currently, the nation monitors **bi?aat** using a fish fence and counter, however, increased predation by bears and rising water levels have posed challenges to the efficacy of the system and staff are seeking an improved method for enumeration.

A potential partnership with Hupacasath First Nation is being considered as part of Ditidaht's proposal, for hydroacoustic surveying of juvenile Hobiton **bi?aat**.

The deadline for Nuu-chah-nulth Nation proposals to DFO's RMOT initiative is November 30. For more information on the funding opportunity, contact Nicole Backe, DFO AFS Manager, WCVI, at nicole.backe@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

To apply to the RMOT opportunity with Ehattesaht/Chinehkint First Nation, contact Dave Miller at fishieres@ehatis.ca.

Ha'wilth saɬiix̣ab, Paul Tate (L) and Josh Tate (R) of Ditidaht Fisheries work on repairs to the Hobiton River fish counter box in 2020. Funding from DFO's RMOT initiative will boost Ditidaht's ability to enumerate migrating adult Hobiton bi?aat.

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