

The Campbell River Special Management Zone (CRSMZ) is the latest and most persistent (so far) iteration since the late 1970's of an evolving series of regulations in the outer estuary area designed to sustain both returning chinook to the river and the recreational fishery for them in this area.

The initial regulations constraining fishing gear beyond the usual began with a prohibition on multi-point hooks as snagging of holding chinook with the use of jigs like Deadly Dicks became an issue around 1977, followed not long afterwards by a ban on the use of bait. To begin with these rules applied only in the Tyee Pool area, with a lower boundary at the NW end of what was then called the Western Mines wharf; by the mid-1980's the area of concern had been expanded to the other side of the estuary in what is known as Frenchman's Pool, as far as Orange Point near the entrance to Duncan Bay. And, as a result of a near fatal collision in 1987 between a speeding powerboat and a near stationary tyee rowboat, not long afterwards Tyee Pool became a no power zone during the Tyee Club season (15 July – 15 September) between the end of Tyee Spit and the municipal boat launch (since removed). This is a Transport Canada regulation

Throughout this period the traditional rowboat fishery conducted under Tyee Club rules (no power while fishing, artificial lure only, Club specific tackle regulations; [www.tyeeclub.org](http://www.tyeeclub.org)) was always accompanied by power boats fishing for the same chinook, often with much the same gear. However, by the mid-1990's downrigger assisted trolling gear and the use of flasher and hootchy rigs became more commonplace throughout the Campbell River area, including in the outer rivermouth chinook fishery where previously this type of gear was unknown.

At this time the return of chinook to the Campbell/Quinsam watershed became low enough to be a concern for local DFO managers (see escapement graph starting 1995 appended, attachment #1) and continuation of the fishery became dependent on the results of chinook observed in-river on a certain day during a swim by hatchery staff – my memory is a bit hazy but I think it was the last Wednesday of August and the required number was 800 fish. After 3 consecutive years of less than 3,000 chinook returning, in 1998 a low in-river count saw the rivermouth fishery closed for the first

time before the traditional Tyee Club season close of September 15<sup>th</sup>, even though the return post-season was assessed at about 4,700 fish. In part as a result of the early closure only 14 tyee's were registered as caught under Tyee Club rules, which was considered very poor.

In 1999 many powerboats were fishing with flasher and hootchy rigs from downriggers right up against the no-power boundary and there were some highly productive evening bites in particular. Crowding by power boats became a social issue in the SE end of Tyee Pool and DFO (Dave Ewart) became concerned the rate of chinook harvest there was unsustainable. In consequence, the rivermouth area as it was then defined (NW end of Western Mines dock to Orange Point) was closed to fishing sometime in the third week of August. The Tyee Club count was only 5 tyee's even though the chinook return that year was greater than 8,000 fish, a significant improvement over the previous few years.

Against that background the feeling in the community was that the Tyee Club would not be able to continue if the same circumstances were repeated every year and so change to management of the rivermouth fishery was required. That fall DFO supported two public meetings to discuss the issue, held at the Campbell River Lodge. They were well attended with lots of passionate debate, and for sure there were those who thought that no change was necessary and that anglers should be allowed to fish under the rules of the day until DFO thought it time to close the fishery, if necessary. However, the overwhelming opinion expressed, and not just amongst those who participated in the Tyee Club fishery, was that the Tyee Club was unique to Campbell River and a special part of the towns' culture and something that should be sustained if at all possible.

In the following months there was considerable discussion between DFO (Gord McEachen) and the CR Sport Fishing Advisory Committee about exactly how to sustain the traditional Tyee Club fishery while maintaining opportunity for those in powerboats. One key factor was that DFO advised it could not ban downriggers in an area, however the weight used on them could be limited and so it was decided that 6 ounces/168 grams was the maximum weight allowed on either the fishing line or

downrigger in the SMZ. In addition, secondary attractor devices (i.e. flashers) not affixed directly to the hook were prohibited, both of which constraints had to be described as a condition of license; the use of bait remained prohibited and only one barbless single hook was allowed by regulation. Finally, it was decided to expand the area of what became known as the SMZ much further to the southeast, past downtown to the entrance to the Hidden Harbour marina adjacent to the Anchor Inn.

Because of the shallow water, shoreline oriented nature of the fishery the encounter rate of chinook not from the Campbell/Quinsam watershed is very rare. Anglers, primarily from the Tyee Club fishery, have been submitting heads for both CWT and otolith analysis, the 2014-18 results of which are appended (attachment #2).

As a personal opinion, in the nearly twenty years of its existence I would say the CRSMZ and its regulations have been a real success – meaningful opportunity to fish for large chinook in a traditional fashion has been sustained for all anglers regardless of the style of boat they use. Because of the fishing gear allowed it is almost by definition a moderately productivity fishery at best and if the return is low DFO doesn't have to be concerned about unsustainable harvest on holding chinook there. Conservation comes first but expectation and opportunity in a near 100 year-old fishery is maintained and a fishing institution unique to Campbell River has an assured future.

One outcome of this is that the CRSMZ has provided a template for similar management action in other traditional terminal fisheries that become threatened by changes to both fishing gear and size of boats. So far, the only time/area where "SMZ" rules have come into effect is at the head of Rivers Inlet where once again a traditional small boat/low tech fishery was threatened by the increased size and sophistication of newer participating boats and the prospect of early closure due to unsustainable harvest. Different rules were developed in Area 9 but same principles were used in determining them, and the Rivers Inlet SMZ is also described as a condition of license.

