

## **Ecosystem-based management and the principle of ‘Discovery’**

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The extent of Aboriginal modification of landscape and species before European contact is an ‘inconvenient truth’. Pacific salmon are one of many marine and terrestrial species managed and enhanced to increase food, economic and territorial security. The term ‘traditional ecological knowledge’ (TEK) fails to do justice to the connection between knowledge and social, cultural, economic and spiritual values. This is signified artistically in ‘transformation’ and in recognition of other creatures as powerful spiritual beings. New commercial fisheries ‘transformed’ such beings into commodities. Focus on ‘desirable’ species first in fisheries (later in agriculture) and central management undercut traditional ecosystem management and siphoned wealth from tribal territories. Late 20<sup>th</sup> century interest in TEK focussed on use in single-species management grounded in neo-classical economics, notably the concept of ‘maximum economic yield’. The ‘discovery’ of ‘ecosystem-based management’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century mirrors Columbus’ ‘discovery’ of the Americas. The discoverers see what they want and expect to see. Results from collaborative computer models of Northern BC ecosystems in the 1750s, 1950s and 1900 provide benchmarks of abundance, diversity and trophic structure that feed into a whole ecosystem restoration approach based on ‘optimum restorable biomass’. A new category of ecosystem knowledge and values (EKV) might link respectful sharing of knowledge of productive potential to the flow of economic, social, cultural and spiritual benefits and encourage restoration.