



September,12, 2016

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard (Beauséjour)
Government of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

Via Email: Min@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Dear Minister LeBlanc;

It was a pleasure meeting you a few weeks ago while you visited British Columbia and the Fraser River with Canada's Man In Motion, Rick Hansen. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet you during your tour of our Heritage River. I am writing to you regarding the critical state of our salmon fishery.

As you are aware, 2016 has been a very difficult year when it comes to the Fraser River salmon fishing season. The Sockeye salmon return has been a fraction of predicted numbers and based on these low numbers, will likely go down as **the lowest return in recorded history**. This low return has come at a large financial and cultural cost to commercial fishing interests, First Nations food and ceremonial, sport and guided fishing experiences as well as to the fishing tackle industry.

I believe **all sectors agree that the closure to all Sockeye fisheries in the approach waters as well as the in-river fisheries is justified** due to this low Sockeye return. However, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) must **immediately address the negative impact** that the complete salmon closure has had on the sport fishing community. Despite the fact that we agree the Sockeye return is in crisis, there is - and always has been - a fishable number of Chinook salmon returning, for example, throughout the season.

While gill nets of any type fail to fish **truly** selectively, sport fishing with a single barbless hook using a variety of very selective methods eliminates any chance of encountering Sockeye salmon. In the unlikely event that sport fishing anglers did encounter a sockeye, it could be released – unharmed - with very low mortality thanks to current catch and release fishing practices. This low mortality is based on **data collected by your department through it's own catch and release study** conducted several years ago. Extremely low encounters when using very selective fishing methods targeting only Chinook salmon, combined with the extremely high survival rate of Sockeye released (98%) results in - virtually - a 0 % mortality rate.

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Mr. Minister, over the past 15 years we have watched our fishing opportunities diminish annually. With its decision in 2016 to close the sport fishery, once again outside it's traditional opening dates due continued early timed Sockeye concerns, the DFO is costing BC's sport fishing sector millions of dollars. This undue hardship has been levied **without resulting in any positive impact** on Sockeye stocks or their recovery. These politically motivated decisions must not be allowed to continue into future years or you will be signing the death warrant of many dedicated, conservation minded businesses.

As a business owner who relies on predictable openings and fishing opportunities, I can tell you that 2015 and 2016 have put my business as well as the sport fishing industry as a whole in jeopardy. Every day that the river is shut - without announcing the opening date - actively robs many families of their livelihoods.

I respectfully request that the Fraser River be immediately reopened for, at the very least, a catch and release fishery for salmon on the Fraser River. I also urge DFO to open a sport fishing retention fishery on hatchery Coho, Chum and Chinook salmon as there are no conservation concerns for these currently returning to the Fraser.

It is time to separate the politics of stakeholder groups from fisheries management decisions. The survival of many fishing tackle shops, boat dealers, sport fishing outfitters and many others in the tourism sector depend on it.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "A. Nootebos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Nootebos
Owner, BC Sportfishing Group
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CC:
Fisheries and Oceans, Communications Branch
Fraser Valley Angling Guides Association
Rod Clapton, Chair, Sport Fishing Alliance
Owen Bird, Executive Director, Sport Fishing Institute
Matt Jennings, BC Resorts and Outfitters Association