

June 29, 2020

Hon. Bernadette Jordan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0E6

VIA E-MAIL

Dear Minister:

On behalf of BC's public fishery and industry, we the undersigned request your immediate assistance and attention. We write to express extreme disappointment and frustration regarding the continuous erosion of opportunity and access for BC's public fisheries. Both, the lack of consideration and unjustified policies DFO continues to impose on the public sector are destroying an important social and economic component of Canadian society.

The Fraser River is in serious trouble, the alarming declines of salmon and Steelhead deserve and require immediate attention. Many of our genetically diverse and unique species of fish are now threatened or endangered. Our priceless heritage and fishing legacy are in jeopardy and could be lost forever. The Fraser River is of critical importance to not only the many ecosystems that are affected by its health and productivity but all the communities along and near its banks and on the West coast. All are dependent on fish populations and the opportunities and benefits they provide. While the public fishery and related businesses provides BC \$1.1 billion annually, just the Fraser in-river public fishery was estimated at over 100 million dollars annually but has now reduced to near zero. Opportunity that is so vital to our community is being eroded or eliminated each year. A way and means to provide opportunity for the public fishery and First Nations must be sought actively, immediately and collaboratively. Utilizing existing hatchery production and marking all production would aid in ensuring identification of all wild salmon with certainty, provide a way to minimize or avoid impacts on stocks of concern and would provide opportunity for harvest. Failure to act now on these realities will result in irrevocable consequences, not only to hopes for recovery of stocks, but to all fisheries, First Nation, public and commercial.

We believe that with immediate and planned action there can be a positive outcome. We are asking for an approach that provides the best chance to save our treasured and diversified species of fish. Some specific runs like interior Coho and early Stuart Sockeye have been on conservation lists for over 20 years. Many of our Steelhead runs are close to extinction yet today we are still trying to figure out what to do. These and other stocks need a strategic plan, not projects, to prevent further losses or extinction. Fisheries management plays a role but is only one component of what must be a broad and comprehensive plan.

Collectively, collaboratively we must do better for the fish and for Canadians. At tremendous cost to society and to the salmon, time is being wasted debating, discussing, considering, and studying the issues. Through all the deliberating, one thing is clear we need immediate action and for things to change if we are to avert even more serious consequences. We need a recovery plan developed by a team of all those invested and adequate resources to allow this plan to be implemented and successful.

We are collectively ready, willing, and dedicated to contribute and collaborate on a recovery plan and actions implemented as a result. But there must be acknowledgement that Canadians access and opportunity must be recovered too. A plan can and must include details that reasonably and sustainably provide opportunity to all sectors. There is no doubt that the challenges faced are complex but increasingly the dialogue about issues have led to inaction. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking, there is not time for politics. Our collective focus must be on recovery of stocks and on seeking sustainable opportunity for all who seek it.

The Public fishery requests of Minister Jordan and Department

The issues are broad and complex yet there is enough known and understood to take decisive steps and to make progress. We respectfully request the following actions be initiated and implemented, if not immediately, as soon as possible.

- Initiation of a properly funded, comprehensive, ecosystem-based recovery plan and strategy to rebuild stocks and habitat. This will require action from all four levels of government, with DFO acting as the lead agency. To ensure that sustainable fisheries are maintained, recovery exploitation rates should be identified that align with recovery timelines and objectives in the plan.
- Authorize mass marking of all Chinook salmon produced in hatcheries except for those intended to rebuild stocks of concern. This urgent request needs to be acted on in time to mass mark Chinook that are progeny of 2020 broodstock. That Canada produces 10's of millions of Chinook annually in hatcheries that are intended for harvest, yet less than 10% are actually available for harvest in much of the province is a waste of taxpayers money and opportunity needlessly lost.
- Implementation of mark selective fisheries management in the Southern Salish Sea and Juan de Fuca Strait. And implementation of hatchery retention on a broader scale once the progeny of Canadian mass marking return as adults.
- Establish a recreational fisheries division within DFO that provides the human and budget resources commensurate with the value of the fishery to Canada.
- Take steps to identify work with the 75 recommendations outlined in 2012 Cohen Report. The 2012 inquiry provided recommendations that could help Fraser River Sockeye runs and the eco-systems around those runs. These returns of Sockeye represent not only a huge cultural significance for both BC residents and First Nations, they also represent millions of dollars in revenues and jobs for the people that rely on them. In the 8 years since the report only a handful of recommendations have been acted upon. The Cohen Report cost taxpayers \$36 Million and sought advice and input from experts, scientists and stakeholders from every sector yet has been effectively swept under the carpet.
- Implement a predator control program that identifies seals and sea lions that habitually prey on both juvenile and adult salmon and specifically targets only those problem animals. Pinniped predation has been identified as a significant contributor to reduced survival of endangered Chinook and Steelhead populations. Humans have been significant predators of pinnipeds since time immemorial. Take the necessary action to correct the mistakes made in the 70's when pinnipeds were provided complete protection.
- Implement an immediate transition from open net pen to closed containment fish farming practices, honouring commitments made leading up to the 2019 election.
- Use enforcement resources to immediately address the significant problem of illegal and unreported fishing in the Fraser River.

The ongoing efforts to bring the public and commercial fishery and First Nations to collaborative dialogue tables with a mandate to address critical issues that face our fishing resources should be a priority for the department and supported as such. The goal to create a co-operative and respectful approach to deal with today's challenges and complexities in managing fish and people that depend on those fish is an important way forward.

Rather than alienate and exclude any sector or community, now is the time to include all those that care about and are invested in fish and fisheries. Many dedicated, knowledgeable, passionate, and understanding individuals and organizations can be relied upon to make a difference and be agents of change. Recent announcements demonstrate that the department does not seriously consider the commitment and investment by the public fishery in our resources and a sustainable future. We believe that improvements can be made, that recovery is possible, that opportunities can be provided that do not interfere with priority rights and improve rather hinder than prospects for recovery of Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern.

We urge action before it is too late. As a Canadian once said, you miss 100% of the shots you do not take. The time to take shots is now. We must take immediate steps to recover stocks of concern and to determine predictable sustainable opportunity for the public fishery and all Canadians.

If there are questions regarding the points or concerns outlined above, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss them at any time and in greater detail and have linked e-mails to each of the signatories.

Sincerely,

FRASER RIVER SPORTFISHING ALLIANCE



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Co-Chair



[Owen Bird](#),
Executive Director
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Institute of BC**



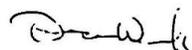
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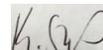
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