

Thursday March 12th, 2020

Attn: The Honourable Bernadette Jordan
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
House of Commons,
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Jordan,

Allow me to congratulate you on your appointment to the position as Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. The purpose of this correspondence is to bring your attention this year's proposed Fraser River Chinook management measures. We urgently need your help to save the Public Salmon Fishery from unnecessary harm.

Until a decade ago, Juan de Fuca Strait, the Lower Georgia Strait and Haro Strait were renowned for their excellent year-round saltwater salmon fisheries. These fisheries around South Vancouver Island are now heavily restricted and the region's angling business community is struggling to remain viable. Using fishing restrictions as a primary recovery strategy for declining Fraser Chinook stocks of concern since 2008 has proved fruitless. This is especially troubling as the department, under their declining annual budgets, opted to close salmon hatcheries on the Fraser River and has done little to restore key areas of deficient habitat. From an 11.5% exploitation rate (ER) of Fraser stream-type Chinook prior to 2008 to under 3%, the Public Salmon Fishery around South Vancouver Island has undeniably borne the brunt of all cut backs.

Recreational fishing is socially significant and an important part of the way of life of thousands upon thousands of Canadians in British Columbia. Bringing a salmon home for the family table is integral to a successful experience in this fishery. Moreover, this wholesome past time pumps many millions of dollars each year into numerous small angling service businesses, including lodges, guides, charters, marinas, tackle stores, bait suppliers and fishing gear manufacturers. Many of these companies are the backbone of our small South Island coastal communities. Additionally, Southern British Columbia now has indigenous community members and bands who rely on the Public Salmon Fishery for their income.

In 2019, your predecessor, responding to the low returns of Fraser Stream-Type Chinook stocks of concern and the Big Bar slide on the Fraser River implemented an emergency

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fishing plan. The regulations placed the Public Salmon Fishery in Southern British Columbia under a catch-and-release approach from April 16th to July 14th or July 31st dependent on area. This decision, in our opinion, was a mistake and unfairly restricted the Public's fishery, because anglers were not allowed the opportunity to access abundant hatchery-origin Chinook without impacting stocks of concern. We believe, when placed under catch-and-release, our unique British Columbia ocean-based Public Salmon Fishery is unable to survive. Canadians, who fish for salmon on the ocean, seek to retain a fish for the table.

Our neighbours to the south in Washington State, annually produce approximately 75,000,000 adipose fin-clipped Chinook salmon through their federal, state and indigenous run hatcheries. Wild USA Chinook are endangered and the State produces marked (fin-clipped) hatchery raised Chinook expressly to support and sustain fisheries. These fish, which are plentiful in the Canadian waters around South Vancouver Island, provide excellent selective Chinook harvesting opportunities for Canadians during most of the year. The benefits of this selective fishing are that anglers will release ALL wild fish and retain only hatchery fish, which they can identify because hatchery fish have had their adipose fin removed. These USA origin hatchery Chinook are in South Vancouver Island waters between October and June and under the Pacific Salmon Treaty Canadians are legally allowed to access these fish.

During the salmon fishery planning in 2019, the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) representatives urged your department's fisheries managers to permit salmon retention fishing opportunities. They recommended fisheries that drastically reduced any exploitation of the wild stocks of concern to below the DFO ER targets, while maintaining *viable* options for the Canadian public; sadly, that well-reasoned advice went unheeded. In 2019, the opportunity to catch and keep abundant hatchery-origin Chinook was squandered.

In the DFO letter to First Nations and DFO Advisory Groups (from DFO Pacific Region Salmon Management Team - March 2nd, 2020) regarding Fraser River Chinook Conservation Measures, it states "the Department plans to implement management measures that were announced for the 2019 season, beginning April 1st, 2020." This is a roll over without change from last year. It goes on to state "Interim measures beginning April 1st, 2020, will be in place until a decision is made surrounding future measures." Additionally, "... potential adjustments to 2019 management measures or alternative approaches should be considered for the period June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021." Our interpretation of this indicates that the period April 1 to May 31th in 2020, has no potential for change and we could be locked in to catch and release for spring 2021 as well.

There are specific areas of Southern British Columbia that at certain times your department's own historical data indicates there is zero presence of Fraser Chinook stocks of concern. Why would hatchery-origin Chinook harvest opportunities not be permitted there? Your department's fisheries managers must do all that they can to maintain sustainable salmon fisheries for the public, to preserve socio-economic benefits for Canadians, while dealing with conservation and constitutionally protected fisheries.

April 1st, 2020 is rapidly approaching. The opportunity to craft salmon fisheries that benefit from abundant USA origin hatchery-marked Chinook around South Vancouver Island is still possible. However, unless your fisheries managers act immediately, we believe another year of viable fishing opportunity will be lost. I am confident the Sport Fishing Advisory Board representatives will, without delay, share their expertise with your department's fisheries managers to identify areas of Southern British Columbia where retention fisheries make sense and meet conservation objectives.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, the membership of our coalition and the South Vancouver Island angling community, I respectfully appeal to you to act expeditiously. We urge you to direct your staff to make every possible effort to sustain and foster our unique Public Salmon Fishery. And, wherever possible, support scientifically defensible opportunities where they exist without impacting the stocks of concern. Thank you in advance for considering our request.

Yours in conservation,



Christopher Bos
President

South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition is a non-profit angling advocacy group, based in Victoria British Columbia, that represents 750 fee-paying members and the interests of the South Vancouver Island angling community in all matters of marine and freshwater fisheries. We advocate for healthy abundant marine ecosystems and the use of strategic enhancement for the benefit of all Canadians.

NOTE: Letter sent by Regular Mail to the addressee and copied by Electronic Mail to:

Ken MacDonald – MP – Chair, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Mel Arnold – MP – Vice Chair, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Marilene Gill – MP – Vice Chair, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
The Honourable Ed Fast – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Terry Beech – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Jaime Battiste – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Richard Bragdon – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Blaine Calkins – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Gord Johns – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Serge Cormier – MP – Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Ken Hardie – MP - Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Robert J. Morrissey – MP - Member, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Randall Garrison – MP Esquimalt - Saanich-Sooke
Laurel Collins – MP Victoria
Elizabeth May – MP Saanich – Gulf Islands
Alistair MacGregor – MP Cowichan - Malahat-Langford
Paul Manly – MP - Nanaimo – Ladysmith
Rachel Blaney – MP – North Island – Powell River
John Horgan – Premier of British Columbia
Rebecca Reid – DFO – Regional Director General (Pacific Region)
Martin Paish – Chair - Sport Fishing Advisory Board