

Minister of  
Fisheries and Oceans



Ministre des  
Pêches et des Océans

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E6

September 28, 2020

Mr. Christopher Bos  
President  
South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition Society  
3-774 Bay Street  
Victoria BC V8T 5E4

Dear Mr. Bos:

Thank you for your correspondence of March 12, 2020, regarding the management approach for Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern. I appreciate your kind words on my appointment as Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. I regret the delay in responding.

As you know, we are living in unprecedented times. I appreciate the opportunity to address how we are responding to the rapidly evolving and fluid COVID-19 pandemic.

As Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, I am committed to providing the Canadian fisheries sector the support needed so it can continue to provide the world with high-quality, sustainably sourced fish and seafood. To learn about the measures the Government is taking to support Canadians and businesses, I encourage you to consult the website for [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#) and the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) website for [COVID-19 – Information for industry and partners](#).

Of the 13 wild Fraser River chinook salmon populations assessed by the [Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada \(COSEWIC\)](#), only one has been classified as not at risk. Seven are endangered, four threatened and one is listed as special concern. We urgently need to address these declines, as well as the changes to marine and freshwater ecosystems that are directly affecting salmon and our coastal communities.

On June 19, 2020, DFO released the [2020 Fisheries Management Measures to Protect Fraser River Chinook](#) that will support at-risk Fraser River Chinook populations. These measures were developed following consultation with Indigenous communities, recreational and commercial fishing organizations, and environmental organizations. Addressing the challenges faced by Fraser River Chinook requires significant measures for all fisheries in areas where these stocks may be encountered.

As always, conservation is the Department's first priority in management of the salmon fishery; however, the jobs and communities that depend on Chinook fisheries were also considered. Several recreational fishery opportunities have been announced in local areas where Chinook can be retained with low risk of Fraser Chinook encounters.

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Though fisheries management measures are an important tool, they will not be sufficient on their own to restore these important stocks. DFO is also working on projects to support habitat protection and restoration, climate adaptation, improved stock assessment and enhanced science collaboration. For more information on these and other management measures for at-risk Fraser River Chinook, please visit the Department's [Frequently Asked Questions](#) webpage, which will be updated as new information becomes available.

DFO shares your concern about the significant landslide near Big Bar. In partnership with First Nations and the Province of British Columbia, we are working toward restoring sustainable fish passage for future salmon returns. For current information on the Big Bar landslide response, please visit [DFO's Big Bar landslide response webpage](#), which is updated weekly.

Regarding your request for an expansion to mark selective fisheries (MSF) (i.e., retention of hatchery origin Chinook with missing adipose fin), there are a number of issues that need to be considered. DFO is currently reviewing the following information to support decision making on potential expansion of MSF:

- Conservation: MSF fisheries will still encounter wild Chinook. Release mortalities of stocks of concern need to be accounted for to ensure MSF fisheries do not adversely impact wild unmarked stocks of conservation concern. MSFs are typically considered in areas where there are high proportions of hatchery fish. Frequently, and in many areas around Vancouver Island, the proportion of marked fish encounters would likely remain too low to support MSF without incurring substantial release mortality on unmarked wild fish.
- Ensuring stock assessment information is not compromised: Currently, Canadian hatcheries only mark hatchery Chinook that carry coded-wire tags (CWTs) to support stock assessment of both hatchery and wild fish from the same geographic area. Additional MSFs and/or additional clipping of hatchery fish that do not carry CWTs will require Canada to significantly adapt the fishery monitoring and stock assessment programs that are necessary to maintain information on wild Chinook and to meet Canada's Pacific Salmon Treaty obligations. This will require additional resources to ensure the Department meets its commitments under the Pacific Salmon Treaty.
- Cost: Even without increasing current hatchery Chinook production, additional marking/clipping of significant additional numbers of hatchery-origin Chinook would incur substantial costs and, in some areas, may be logistically challenging given the large volumes of hatchery-origin Chinook being released within short timeframes each year.
- Effects on ecosystems: Consideration for increasing production of hatchery-origin Chinook to support fisheries must be carefully planned in order to: manage ecosystem effects (e.g., carrying capacity of natural systems to support salmon rearing); control of potential competitive interactions between hatchery and wild salmon; and, ensure that the genetic diversity of wild origin salmon is maintained.

I agree that there are potential benefits to fisheries from MSF opportunities but this must be balanced with a full understanding of the issues and potential resource requirements to mitigate concerns. DFO is planning further consultation in the fall of 2020 to further inform its decision making. Moreover, the Department is conducting a pilot project to mark Conuma River Hatchery Chinook in conjunction with a project exploring the application of new stock assessment tools (e.g., parentage-based genetic tagging) of all hatchery-origin Chinook broodstock for the next three years. The results of this work will help the Department to further develop its approach for potential implication of MSFs.

Rest assured, DFO will continue to deliver on its mandate during these times. The unpredictability of this situation continues to be a challenge, and our response will continue to evolve. I am confident that the sector is resilient and will remain a strong and vital sector in the Canadian economy.

Thank you for writing and providing me with your thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bernadette Jordan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

c.c.: The Honourable John Horgan, M.L.A.  
Premier of British Columbia  
Mr. Ken McDonald, M.P.  
Avalon  
Mr. Mel Arnold, M.P.  
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