

Ottawa

Room 518, Confederation Building
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Tel.: 613-996-1119
Fax.: 613-996-0850

Ottawa

Pièce 518, Édifice de la Confédération
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0A6
Tél. : 613-996-1119
Télééc. : 613-996-0850



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Constituency

1 - 9711 Fourth Street
Sidney, British Columbia V8L 2Y8
Tel.: 250-657-2000
Fax.: 250-657-2004

Circonscription

1 - 9711, rue Fourth
Sidney (Colombie-Britannique) V8L 2Y8
Tél. : 250-657-2000
Télééc. : 250-657-2004

Elizabeth May

Member of Parliament / Députée
Saanich – Gulf Islands / Saanich – Gulf Islands

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1N 6W4

URGENT – Pacific Salmon in crisis

August 26, 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for all you are doing to keep Canadians safe in these perilous times.

As ever, I urge you to move much harder and faster on the climate emergency. It is the climate emergency, even more than the COVID pandemic, which endangers all Canadians and the biosphere itself.

However, I am writing today to increase your awareness of a critical emergency – the collapse of Pacific Salmon.

The press release from the Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish and Musqueam First Nations, included at the end of this letter, prompts me to raise the alarm. Prior to prorogation, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans had been holding hearings about the increasing threats to Pacific Salmon. The testimony of experts, biologists, First Nations leaders and fishers made it abundantly clear to the committee members – regardless of political party – that we are running out of time. The climate crisis is also a prime threat to all marine life and is particularly a threat to salmon, who need cool streams as key habitat for spawning. The list of threats is daunting and the salmon are on the brink of collapse.

Emergency actions are needed, and from multiple ministers. Some of the steps were already commitments made in the 2019 Liberal platform. Some can benefit from those platform commitments with only a slight change in emphasis.

As an urgent matter, I urge you and the key ministers involved in this issue, the Honourable Bernadette Jordan and the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, to announce emergency measures to protect and restore Pacific Salmon populations.

Key measures include:

- Doubling Funding to the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund;
- Delivering on the platform commitment to phase-out open pen salmon aquaculture operations by 2025;
- Restoring and protecting watersheds all up and down the Fraser and Thompson watersheds;
- Implementing the Wild Salmon Policy;
- Announcing that the platform commitment to plant two billion trees will achieve multiple benefits in carbon sequestration, climate adaptation, biodiversity enhancement, job creation and wild salmon habitat restoration, by immediately planting ecologically appropriate trees along slopes in areas of salmon habitat where all vegetation has been wiped out by earlier seasons' forest fires;
- Removal of poorly sited dikes and flood prevention obstructions in the lower Fraser;
- Action on hatcheries for the most severely depleted stocks (but maintaining a priority on salmon stocks capable of restoration being allowed to recover without competition from hatchery salmon);
- Protection of herring stocks; and
- Addressing a more permanent solution to the rockslide at Big Bar, moving to contract with engineering firms to build fish ladders.

The goal must be resilient watersheds capable of meeting multiple ecosystem goals. The clock is ticking on saving Pacific Salmon.

I am sure you do not want prorogation and pulling the plug on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to be seen to cause delay. We need action now.

With best wishes for you and your family through this difficult time,



Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament
Saanich-Gulf Islands
Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Cc: The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
The Honourable Bernadette Jordan
The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson

First Nations Leaders Declare Collapse of Pacific Sockeye

News Category

Press Release

(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səfilwətaʔ/sefilwítulh (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – Aug. 18, 2020) – Due to catastrophic decline in stocks, the First Nations Leadership Council is calling on Bernadette Jordan, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, to issue an emergency order to close all sockeye fisheries on the Fraser River.

“Fisheries and Oceans recently put the estimated return of sockeye to the Fraser at 283,000. This is the lowest return in my lifetime, and probably the lowest in history,” said BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “Ten years ago, the Cohen Commission was looking into sockeye decline when we had over a million fish returning. The federal government has clearly not taken this situation seriously – this is a non-partisan issue. Minister Jordan needs to declare this stock collapsed and issue an emergency order to close all sockeye fisheries. We don’t have any more time,” he continued.

Indigenous communities face the greatest impact

The Aboriginal right to fish was won by Musqueam in the Supreme Court of Canada in the *R v Sparrow*, 1990 decision, which affirmed Musqueam’s right to fish, and set out criteria to determine whether government decisions affecting Aboriginal rights are justifiable (known as the ‘Sparrow Test’). These fishing rights are protected and affirmed under the Constitution Act, 1982, recognized under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and form a fundamental part of First Nations inherent right to self-government. Salmon is an integral part of First Nations societies and cultures since time immemorial. But the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has consistently prioritized commercial fishing and failed in its fiduciary responsibility to ensure priority access by First Nations for food, social, and ceremonial fisheries.

“Now is the time for First Nations in BC to come together on a coherent strategy to save and rebuild Pacific salmon stocks. The first step is to urge the Minister for an emergency order to close fisheries on these decimated stocks,” said Chief Dalton Silver, Fisheries Representative for the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “This crisis, and a subsequent emergency order, may allow the Nations who have accessed these species for

thousands of years, and rely on these stocks for food security in remote communities to access their traditional harvests.”

The First Nations Fisheries Council of BC is investigating the cumulative effects impacting sockeye stocks that affect these magnificent creatures. Research has pointed to changing ocean conditions resulting from climate change that affect survivability and food supply, non-selective harvest methods, increased predation, and open-net pen fish farming on migration routes. The Big Bar Landslide is also anticipated to have significant effects on returning fish to successfully reach their spawning grounds.

“First Nations leadership has been calling on the Federal Government to take real action to save pacific salmon stocks for decades now,” said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit. “Fisheries and Oceans Canada has consistently failed to take our calls seriously. It is now time for their failure to be recognized, and for responsibilities for the full jurisdiction and management of salmon stocks to be transferred back to First Nations.”

https://www.bcafn.ca/news/first-nations-leaders-declare-collapse-pacific-sockeye?fbclid=IwAR0kz6AYHwsk5a4_iKdB3D57oTQ31WBTU3kD8jgII8FI8Y5luv8HG s1OqyM