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Your file *Votre référence*
Our file *Notre référence*
2019-501-00070

SEP 18 2019

Mr. Rod Clapton
President
BCDF President
< rclapton@shaw.ca >

Dear Mr. Clapton:

Thank you for your correspondence of August 10, 2019 regarding the [new fisheries management measures](#) announced by the Government of Canada on April 16 to conserve Fraser Chinook, and the implications of these measures for the Fraser River recreational fishery.

I appreciate that it has been a difficult year for all those who depend on Pacific salmon, and I acknowledge and very much sympathize with your concerns regarding the economic and social impacts resulting from the reduced fishing opportunities for Chinook salmon.

The fisheries management measures announced in April are in response to the ongoing poor status of Fraser Chinook, details of which are comprehensively documented in the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada's (COSEWIC) status assessment of Southern British Columbia (BC) Chinook. In November 2018, COSEWIC determined that of the 13 Fraser River Chinook Designatable Units (DUs) assessed, seven DUs were *Endangered*, four were *Threatened*, one was *Special Concern* and only one was deemed *Not at Risk*. More details are available on the [COSEWIC summary webpage](#).

In addition, productivity of many of these populations has declined to the point where fewer offspring are returning compared to the parent generation. For example, only 490 natural origin Chinook returned to the Nicola River in 2018 from a parental generation of 7,122 Chinook.

DFO is taking the COSEWIC assessments very seriously and the previously announced precautionary fishery restrictions are intended to provide a high degree of protection to at-risk Fraser Chinook returning in 2019. The management target was to reduce overall Canadian fishery mortalities on these endangered populations to near five percent to allow as many fish to pass through to the spawning grounds as possible. Given that Chinook are of great importance to First Nations for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes, DFO had an additional objective of reducing the impact of these harvest constraints on FSC fisheries by increasing access to the abundant Summer 4-1 Chinook management unit, reflecting the court-defined priority of FSC fisheries.

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Achieving these conservation and management objectives is DFO's highest priority, and DFO has implemented significant actions in commercial troll, recreational, and First Nations fisheries in times and areas where at risk Fraser River Chinook may be encountered.

A general summary of current recreational fisheries management measures are outlined in the [BC sport fishing guide](#). Information on openings is posted on the [Fishery Notices](#) website.

With respect to your specific concern about the marine recreational fishery in the Strait of Georgia, the management measures there are intended to allow for some opportunity once the Fraser Chinook stocks of greatest concern have passed through these areas; this allows the fishery to target other stocks, some of which are non-Fraser origin. Recreational closures have remained in place within the Fraser River for the duration of the period when fishing would directly impact Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern as well as Fraser Sockeye that have returned in very low numbers. In 2019 this has been amplified by the Big Bar landslide, which is reducing the number of Spring and Summer 5-2 Chinook and Sockeye expected to return to the spawning grounds.

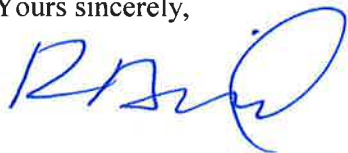
The challenges facing at-risk Fraser River Chinook salmon stocks are multi-faceted. The road to recovery requires a long-term view and the collaboration of First Nations, recreational and commercial harvesters, multiple levels of government and all interested parties. The Department is convening a Southern BC Chinook Planning committee. The committee will address a broad range of issues that are impacting Fraser Chinook stocks including: land and water use; fish habitat; the role of hatcheries to support rebuilding and the potential for mark-selective fisheries; how seals and sea lions may be affecting Chinook salmon; and other relevant topics

I appreciate hearing from you about the economic impact of the closures. These decisions are extremely difficult to make. The Department must first and foremost make decisions that protect at-risk stocks to ensure the sustainability of stocks for the future. After conservation, the Government's decisions must respect the priority of, and provide opportunities for, constitutionally protected FSC Indigenous fisheries.

I hope my response has clearly outlined the severity of the conservation concerns for at-risk populations of Fraser River Chinook. As noted, the Department will soon launch a process to engage in conversations that will address a broad range of possible measures that could be considered to support Chinook recovery, that could further inform decisions for 2020.

Thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Reid
Regional Director General
Pacific Region