

Attn:

**Honourable Lana Popham**; BC Minister of Agriculture

**Honourable Doug Donaldson**; BC Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Re: **Interior Fraser Steelhead Emergency Culture**

Dear Ministers:

Interior Fraser steelhead are an iconic and highly valuable strain of steelhead that are important to many residents of BC. For millennia they have provided food for First Nations, and in more recent times have provided substantial social and economic benefits for small interior communities like Spences Bridge and Ashcroft.

Unfortunately, they are now on the brink of extinction with only 89 individuals predicted to return to the Thompson River and 39 to the Chilcotin River in 2019. If we don’t do something meaningful and significant for this brood year, we run a serious risk of losing their genetics forever. That would be a tragedy, and represent our generation letting down future generations because of inaction.

In order to prevent this from happening, we urge you and your staff to immediately implement, in conjunction with Fisheries & Oceans Canada, an “***Emergency Conservation Fish Culture Intervention***” to maintain the genetics of this strain of fish by capturing this years return, and raising their offspring in a hatchery until a more durable and far reaching solution can be reached.

The time for urgent action is now. These fish will be spawning spring 2020, so there is still time to save the genetic foundation of these unique and valuable runs if we care enough to take meaningful action before its too late. The South Coast Sport Fishing Advisory Board of BC has approved the following motion to support this request which has been provided to DFO.

MOTION SC-FTO-2019-3-1: Emergency Conservation Fish Culture Intervention

“*Whereas projected 2019/2020 returns for steelhead to the Chilcotin and Thompson are 39 and 86 fish respectively, it must be assumed that those numbers represent functional extinction; and*

*Whereas all recovery options to date have not reversed that alarming trend; and*

*Whereas immediate actions are therefore required to save this and future brood years from potential extinction; and*

*Whereas “Emergency [Conservation] Fish Culture Intervention” is identified in the Provincial Steelhead Management Plan for one generation only as a last resort when stocks are at a point of extreme conservation concern and in peril of extinction;*

*Therefore, be it resolved that an “Emergency Conservation Fish Culture Intervention” program be implemented immediately as the only current viable option to safeguard those brood years.*

*Be it further resolved that this measure be developed in conjunction with provincial fisheries staff and input from organizations such as the Pacific Salmon Foundation.*”

We urge you to act now to prevent the complete loss of these beautiful and highly valued fish. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely…



Martin Paish

Chair, SFAB



CC

Rebecca Reid – RDG; Fisheries & Oceans Canada

Andrew Thompson – Regional Director, Fisheries Management Branch, Fisheries & Oceans Canada