

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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On the Verge of Wild Salmon Extinction: FNLC Call for Precautionary Principle to be Implemented and Support Nations' Call to End Fish Farms in Discovery Islands

From an abundance-based model, to rebuilding-based model

(X̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm (Musqueam), Ṣḳẉx̣ẉụ́7̣mesh (Squamish) and ṣə̣ḷiḷẉə̣ṭə̣ł (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) - In light of the historic low returns of Pacific wild salmon this year, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is calling on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to fully implement the *Precautionary Principle*. Nations in the Discovery Islands are in consultation with DFO regarding fish farms in their territories and are calling DFO to protect wild Pacific salmon by revoking the licenses for the fish farms immediately.

There is ample research and evidence that supports our understanding that the decline of Pacific wild salmon is the result of cumulative stressors along its migration routes. This understanding requires a fundamental change as to how we manage and protect wild Pacific salmon, to prioritize the rebuilding of wild salmon stocks and ensuring productive systems seven generations into the future. It is a matter of conservation. It is a matter of protecting the identities, culture and food security of B.C. First Nations across the Province.

Chief Dalton Silver, UBCIC Fisheries Representative, stated "In any given year, we can only anticipate 1-4% of out-migrating juveniles to successfully return and successfully spawn. This means that with the historic low returns of wild Pacific salmon, we will see direct impacts on the number of successful spawning events and the number of juveniles that go back out to sea each year. Salmon typically follow a four-year cyclic model, so four years from now, the number of fish that return could very well be a great deal lower than this year. We cannot afford to wait any longer. We need to act now and protect and rebuild from what's left of the remaining salmon stocks."

The *Precautionary Principle* recognizes that in the absence of scientific certainty, conservation measures can and should be taken when there is knowledge of a risk of serious or irreversible harm to the environment and/or resources using best available information. In applying the *Precautionary Principle*, the FNLC is calling for the Government and Minister Jordan to take proactive conservation-based actions and commit to prioritizing the rebuilding of Pacific salmon stocks.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations, stated "From the Cohen Commission, we already know that there is no singular threat that explains the decline of Pacific salmon. We know that combinations of



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.
Prince George, BC
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, BC
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

stressors, the cumulative impacts of threats, is causing this decline. What we need to do, by applying the Precautionary Principle at every level of policy, programs and management, is take action across the suite of known threats and risk that are all contributing to the collapse of wild Pacific salmon stocks.”

Robert Phillips, FNS Political Executive member, said “Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) can’t manage fisheries on the same outdated model anymore; the status-quo model that has led us to the collapse of Pacific salmon fisheries. We need to change from a fisheries management model that is based on abundance, towards a new management model that is based on rebuilding wild stocks. It must be a model based on consent, that recognizes the full jurisdiction and management of First Nations.”

Indigenous communities seeking to save salmon

Nations involved in the Discovery Island consultation on fish farms are seeking to save wild salmon, and support a shift to land-based aquaculture, and an immediate stop to fish farms in the Discovery Islands. The inherent Indigenous rights to self-determination, recognized by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and consistently upheld through Supreme Court Case decisions, must be respected and applied. Consistent with the application of the *Precautionary Principle*, the FNLC is calling on DFO to listen to the impacted First Nations and to do everything possible to save wild salmon.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

For more information, press only:

Chief Dalton Silver, UBCIC

Phone: (604) 751-0947

Email: dalton.silver@sumasfirstnation.com

Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit

Phone: (778) 875-4463

Email: rphillips@fns.bc.ca

Annette Schroeter, BCAFN Communications Officer

Phone: (250) 981-2151