



MAR 26 2014

Dennis Reid
1539 Davie Street
Victoria, British Columbia
V8R 4W4

Dear Mr. Reid:

I am pleased to provide you with Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) response to your Environmental Petition No. 0353 received by the Department on November 26, 2013, concerning DFO's response to the Cohen Commission Report into the Decline of Fraser River Sockeye, British Columbia.

I appreciate being made aware of your concerns in this petition. DFO is providing you with the response to your question.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your petition and trust that you will find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Gail Shea, P.C., M.P.

Attachment (1): Fisheries and Oceans Canada's response to Petition No. 0353

c.c.: Neil Maxwell, Interim Commissioner of the Environment and
Sustainable Development

DFO RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL PETITION NO. 0353

The following responses are provided to address the questions and/or requests related to Environment Petition No. 0353.

THEME: MANDATE

Related to Recommendations 1, 2, and 3

The roles and responsibilities of the Minister and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans with respect to decisions related to fisheries management and fish habitat within federal jurisdiction are clearly communicated to First Nations, other governments and stakeholders. This includes making conservation the first priority in the delivery of regulatory responsibilities.

THEME: WILD SALMON POLICY

Related to Recommendations 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10

The implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy remains a priority for Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Significant progress has been made towards implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy including the development of science-based methodologies to assess the status of salmon conservation units, their habitat and ecosystems as well as multi-stakeholder processes to undertake strategic plans for salmon conservation. As noted in the Policy, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will continue to implement the policy incrementally and within existing resources. The Department is also developing a new implementation plan for the Wild Salmon Policy which is aligned with Cohen Commission recommendations.

Some examples of work to implement the policy include development of habitat indicators, and preparation of habitat status reports in support of Departmental assessments of high priority conservation unit groupings. Additionally, work on status and benchmarks continues including the completion of the report on *Integrated biological status of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon (Oncorhynchus nerka) under the Wild Salmon Policy* which is available at http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/Publications/SAR-AS/2012/2012_056-eng.html.

THEME: MANAGEMENT OF SALMON FARMS

Related to Recommendations 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20

With respect to salmon farming, the Canadian aquaculture industry already operates under some of the strictest regulations in the world in order to minimize risks to the environment. As part of that commitment, the 2013 Economic Action Plan contributed \$57.5 million over five years to bolster environmental protection in the aquaculture sector through science, development of an enhanced regulatory regime and improved reporting.

In the Discovery Islands, the Department has postponed decisions on applications to amend existing marine finfish aquaculture licences that would result in an increase in licensed production and on applications for new marine finfish aquaculture licences within that area for the foreseeable future. During this time, additional scientific research will be conducted and a

disease risk assessment process will be completed. In the interim, licence holders are required to submit fish health data to the Department which is posted on the DFO website.

THEME: ENHANCEMENT

Related to Recommendations 21, 22, 23, and 24

Enhancement facilities operate within established protocols and standard operating procedures to assure good fish health management. To support these initiatives, research is conducted within DFO and also through cooperation in international organizations such as the North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commission to better understand interactions between hatchery raised and wild salmon.

All DFO major hatcheries and community volunteer hatcheries are licenced under the *Pacific Aquaculture Regulations* (PAR), which provides authority to attach conditions of licence, including reporting and record keeping requirements. Compliance is monitored through a risk based approach designed to minimize potential impacts of enhanced fish on wild salmon as part of ongoing program management.

THEME: FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Related to Recommendations 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, and 38

In response to consultations with stakeholders and First Nations, the Department has made progress in more clearly documenting the basis for fishery decision guidelines in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan that is approved by the Minister. The Integrated Fisheries Management Planning process is also an important vehicle to ensure the views of participants in the fishery are taken into account by the Department.

Additionally, the Department is continuing to work with First Nations and stakeholders on important initiatives such as the Commercial Salmon Allocation Framework, catch validation and catch monitoring, selective and demonstration fisheries aimed at sustainable management of salmon populations.

To support test fisheries in the Fraser River, there is a new provision in the *Fisheries Act* that allows for the use of fish to fund science and management activities. In 2013, the Department entered into a collaborative agreement with the Pacific Salmon Commission to deliver Fraser River sockeye test fisheries; similar plans are being made for 2014.

THEME: SCIENCE

Related to Recommendations 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, and 73

DFO invests significant resources in salmon related science which is used to inform fisheries management and regulatory decision making. Some areas of work include data collection on temperature and flow in-river, stock assessment data, post-release survival rates for several fisheries, studies on health status, distribution and migration patterns, impacts of birds and pathogens on marine survival of Fraser River sockeye, fish health, and cumulative effects

stressors. DFO has a number of publications related to this research and plans a number of additional publications for 2014. Information on DFO scientific publications and peer-review processes can be found at (<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/>) and WAVES (<http://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/waves-vagues/>).

DFO also works with others such as the Pacific Salmon Commission on issues of common interest such as hosting an expert panel workshop in June 2010 that reviewed the stressors affecting Fraser River salmon. DFO also works with other international bodies such as the North Anadromous Fisheries Commission on collaborative research related to salmon.

THEME: COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Related to Recommendations 58, 60, 61, and 62

Compliance and enforcement activities are important elements as part of a functioning fisheries management system. To this end, the department has invested in ongoing efforts, using a risk based approach, to patrol areas including the Fraser River to deter illegal fishing activities. Through the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, DFO has continued to fund its enforcement program to similar levels that were achieved in response to the 2004 Southern Salmon Fishery Post Season Review.

Through the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy, DFO provides Aboriginal groups support for the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian program which provides First Nations an opportunity to participate in monitoring and enforcement activities related to their food, social and ceremonial fisheries.

THEME: ABORIGINAL ISSUES

Related to Recommendations 31, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, and 63

DFO is investing effort in building relationships with First Nations and supporting fisheries opportunities for commercial as well as food, social and ceremonial purposes throughout the Pacific Region. This work is supported by a variety of programs and treaty related measures to increase capacity in areas such as catch monitoring, stock assessment and fisheries management.

Additionally, the 2013 and 2014 Federal Budgets invested \$66 million to help increase the participation of First Nations fishing enterprises in integrated commercial fisheries and to improve fisheries management for all participants in the Pacific Region based on managing existing commercial and Aboriginal economic fisheries under common and transparent rules. The Department continues to assess the economic viability and feasibility of in-river commercial fisheries and to authorize demonstration fisheries on an annual basis consistent with the scale of relinquishments from the commercial fishery.

THEME: HABITAT

Related to Recommendations 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 72

Recent amendments to the *Fisheries Act*, brought into effect a prohibition against causing serious harm to fish that are part of or support a commercial, recreational or Aboriginal fishery. To support these changes, the Fisheries Protection Policy Statement, was introduced in November 2013. The goal of the Department in applying the Policy Statement is to provide for the sustainability and ongoing productivity of commercial, recreational and Aboriginal fisheries. To meet the objectives of the Policy Statement, the Department will be guided by a number of principles, including consideration of the ecosystem context, including cumulative effects.

As part of implementing the Fisheries Protection Program, DFO will continue to coordinate and work with the Province of British Columbia on a variety of areas of common interest (including, but not limited to forestry sector activities, and with regard to the British Columbia *Water Act* and *Riparian Areas Regulation*).

Budget 2013 made an initial investment in the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program of \$10 million over two years to support habitat and conservation activities through partnerships with community groups. Further funding of \$15 million was provided in Budget 2014 to support additional conservation projects in communities across the country. DFO has also announced the total value of the Conservation Stamp, estimated to be up to \$1.3 million annually, will be provided to the Pacific Salmon Foundation for salmon related work related to restoration and protection of habitat.

THEME: POLLUTION PREVENTION, CONTAMINANTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Related to Recommendations 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 74

DFO and Environment Canada are working to finalize arrangements with respect to management of Section 36 and the related pollution prevention provisions of the *Fisheries Act*. This is expected to be completed in the near future. In the interim, DFO will continue to support the Regional Environmental Emergency Team, led by Environment Canada, when relevant to DFO's mandate or when DFO's expertise is required.

Advice on contaminants from DFO is now delivered by the National Contaminants Advisory Group through the Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Oceans Science.

Research initiated in 2011 with support from DFO's National Aquatic Climate Change Adaptation Services Program is developing a foundation of information regarding impacts of climate change on sustainable management of fisheries including the development of adaptive approaches to respond to and or mitigate the effects of climate change.

THEME: ACCOUNTABILITY

Related to Recommendation 75

This recommendation is not directed to DFO.