

Tuesday April 06th, 2021

URGENT

Attn: The Honourable Bernadette Jordan
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
Minister's Office
200 Kent Street,
Station 15N100
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0E6

RE: Approval of the SFAB Chinook Retention Fishing Proposal

Dear Minister Jordan,

I write to you concerning an urgent matter, which is of particular importance to the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition membership, as well as the entire Southern BC salmon angling community. Although your department implemented broad Chinook non-retention regulations beginning on April 1st 2021, I implore you to approve modest Chinook retention opportunities for the Public fishery as soon as possible.

Under former Fisheries Minister Wilkinson and now under your instruction, Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard (DFO) has implemented non-retention of Chinook salmon broadly in Southern BC Public Fisheries during the months of April, May, June and July. First in 2019, then again in 2020 and now for a third time in 2021. This has had a devastating effect on the Public Fishery.

Many hard-working Canadians who either own or work for small companies that support the Public Fishery may have or have already lost their jobs due to your Chinook non-retention management. Chinook salmon is THE most important species to BC's salmon anglers. Being able to keep a Chinook when fishing at this time of year is crucial to the success and long-term survival of the Public salmon fishery.

At this very moment, the 2020 Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) Southern BC Chinook fishing proposal sits on your desk awaiting final approval. The recommended fishing opportunities contained in that proposal are both mindful of the conservation requirements for Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern and are also data supported. This proposal was fashioned by a small salmon technical team from the SFAB, working with staff from your own department and used the most recent catch monitoring and stock assessment data.

Subsequently, your staff prepared the Chinook Evaluation Framework (February 23, 2021) document; we thank you and your staff for organizing this detailed analysis. The thorough DFO report confirms Public Chinook fishing opportunities contained in the SFAB's modest Chinook retention proposal are either no risk or low risk. For that reason, I implore you today to immediately approve the fishing opportunities contained in the SFAB proposal and instruct your Pacific staff to implement them as soon as possible.

South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition Society

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Please clearly understand we, as anglers, support conservation and have been seeking a meaningful recovery plan from your department regarding Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern for over fifteen years. However, the SFAB proposal on your desk has been specifically fashioned so there are absolutely minimal encounters of these challenged stocks. The objective is for anglers to harvest abundant stocks and USA origin hatchery Chinook, while stocks of concern are allowed to recover.

As people closely linked to the angling community and the business infrastructure that supports it, we genuinely fear that unless you provide a life line to us, such as approving the modest opportunities contained in the SFAB proposal, our fishery will collapse in the not-too-distant future. With COVID-19 restrictions further hampering small businesses in British Columbia, spring 2021 is a key time for the retention of Chinook, wherever viable.

You may ask why we are requesting you to act immediately. Your decision on this matter relates to the existing 2020-2021 Salmon Integrate Fisheries Management Plan and is also particularly time sensitive. April and May this year offer Chinook retention opportunities in some areas of the South Coast, but after that time and in certain fisheries management areas migrating Fraser Chinook become more prevalent rendering retention fisheries potentially less viable.

On behalf of our membership and all salmon anglers in Southern BC, I again implore you to approve the modest SFAB Chinook retention proposal and have your Pacific DFO staff implement those fisheries immediately. Thank you for considering our urgent request.

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Bos
President

Sent by electronic mail to: The Honourable Minister Bernadette Jordan – min@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Cc'd: Rebecca Reid - Regional Direct General, Pacific Region
 Andrew Thomson - Regional Director, Fisheries Management
 Jeff Grout - Resource Manager, Salmon – Fraser Chinook Lead