



## FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL

of British Columbia

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### Parliamentary Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans releases report on review of 2012 changes to the *Fisheries Act*

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The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO) released their report on February 24, 2017 on the review of changes to the *Fisheries Act*, which were passed in 2012 as part of the Harper Government's omnibus budget bills that affected many federal environmental laws. First Nations were not meaningfully consulted about these changes, which were widely viewed as a watering down of the *Fisheries Act* and its power to protect the environment and manage for sustainable fisheries.

"The First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia (FNFC) is pleased that the report addresses a number of issues put forward in our submission to the review process, such as the need for transparent fisheries decision making based on science and Indigenous traditional knowledge, and the need to modernize the *Fisheries Act* to reflect the values of ecosystem-based management, sustainable development, the precautionary principle, and co-management with Indigenous Peoples" said FNFC President Ken Malloway.

The FNFC is also pleased that the report echoes a number of the recommendations put forward by the FNFC and other conservation and community groups:

- Restoration of the prohibition on harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat (HAAD);
- Increased funding for research on ecosystem science;
- Reduced reliance on project proponent self-assessment;
- Increased resources for monitoring, compliance and enforcement;
- Direction for restoration and recovery of fish habitat and stocks.

One issue raised in the FNFC's submission that was not discussed in the FOPO report was the introduction of definitions for "aboriginal", "commercial" and "recreational" fisheries, which sought to restrict aboriginal fishing rights including the right to fish for economic purposes. DFO indicated that the review would consider the implications of these definitions, but the report fails to address them.

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“One of the most critical issues with the 2012 changes was the introduction of problematic definitions,” said FNFC Executive Director Jordan Point. “The definition of ‘aboriginal fisheries’ sought to reduce aboriginal fishing rights to simply a right to harvest, and the definition of ‘commercial fisheries’ created problems because under the omnibus bill changes, any aboriginal fishery for trade, sale or barter would be deemed a commercial fishery. This while some First Nations have already established these traditional economic fisheries as part of their aboriginal fishing rights.”

The FNFC urges the federal government to endorse these recommendations, and to work closely with First Nations to develop legislative proposals. In the spirit of building a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Government of Canada must provide meaningful opportunities for consultation and co-management with First Nations rights holders as we share the critical responsibility of restoring habitat protections and ensuring sustainable fisheries now and for the future.

The FNFC also looks forward to the release of the report by the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, hopefully in the near future, which will also inform the review of the *Fisheries Act*.

Link to the full FOPO report:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=8783708&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=42&Ses=1>

**For more information, contact FNFC Communications Coordinator Aimee Arsenault  
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#### **Background:**

The First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia was established in 2007 to implement the *First Nations Fisheries Action Plan*, an agenda for action in the Pacific fishery for BC First Nations. The *Action Plan's* vision includes all First Nations in BC working together to address issues of shared concern in the fishery, and to enhance the well-being of communities. The plan calls for maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems and species and restoring them as necessary while sharing management responsibility based on ownership of territories and the inherent Rights of First Nations. The Council works with governments and stakeholders to ensure recognition and respect of First Nations' Title and Rights and to improve the conservation and management of the resource. For more information, please visit our website at [www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca](http://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca).

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