



# First Nations Fisheries Council COMMUNIQUÉ

MAY 2020



## FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Northern Transboundary: **Cheri Frocklage**  
Haida Gwaii: **Shawn Cowpar**  
North Coast: **In Progress**  
Central Coast: **Rich Chapple**  
North Vancouver Island: **John Henderson**  
South Vancouver Island: **Larry George**  
West Coast Vancouver Island: **Hugh Braker**  
Lower Mainland: **In Progress**  
Fraser Valley: **Ken Malloway**  
Mid-Fraser 1: **Dawn Machin**  
Mid-Fraser 2: **Richard Wimbush**  
Upper Fraser: **Thomas Alexis**  
Upper Skeena: **Stu Barnes**  
Transboundary Columbia: **Shayla Lawrence**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ʔi ʔə ce:p ʔəw ʔəy ʔaí, Si:yém nə Siyeyə?

*Are you all well, my esteemed friends (relations),*

This greeting in my Hun'qumi'num dialect seems much more appropriate in the current environment as we all continue to work through the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic. The FNFC has managed to keep our operations underway, with a core minimum staff at the office and the rest set up working remotely and rotating days in the office.

Our attention through the initial weeks of the pandemic was spent working with the First Nations Leadership Council and the federal government on addressing the federal program pivots required to respond to the food security needs of BC First Nations, and the economic gaps of lost fishery opportunities. Through many Zoom videoconference meetings and conference calls we were able to inform both levels of government of the need to support fisheries and fish harvesters, which resulted in the programs being announced such as the \$470 million Fish Harvesters Benefit.

Recognizing that we share work on many issues at the national, provincial, watershed, and local scales across many areas of respective priority and governing nations which are far more complex than we can articulate on this page, I would like to express that the more we continue to collaborate and work together, the better results we will see.

(Continued...)

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We would like to raise our hands in thanks \0/ \0/ and show our respect and appreciation for the hard work and dedication that many of you continue to do in your home watersheds and regions during these difficult times. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the tremendous collaborative work at the site of the Big Bar Landslide over the spring, from blasting and removing large boulders and obstacles, to the preparation of the fishways and whoosh cannon preparation for in-season migration of Fraser Salmon. Thank you all for your great efforts.

Current high priority items we continue to focus on include:

- **The state of Pacific salmon**, which continue to face decline and impacts such as low ocean productivity due to climate change, ocean conditions, and threats along the migratory routes by non-selective fisheries and increased pinniped predation. The FNFC continues to partner with many partners to address these concerns, including the Oceans Research Initiative exploring the high seas for impacts and effects to wild salmon populations.
- **Food security** – we have heard from close to 100 BC First Nations that they are not achieving food security needs, and that they are frustrated with the IHPC/IFMP integrated fisheries management planning process as a mechanism that is annually recommended to the Minister. Mainly because it is not in keeping with the priority access required by case law, and the Constitution under S35 (1). We have initiated dialogue with DFO to address this issue, and the required change in order to be consistent with UNDRIP, Reconciliation and the 10 principles of Canada.
- We have raised these issues in collaboration with the BC First Nations Leadership Council, and further supported by the BCAFN Regional Chief, worked with the AFN National Chief to set up meetings with the federal Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans, Indigenous Services Canada, and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs.

As we move forward this year and learn new ways of working together, and convening our positions in a virtual environment, I would like to thank our friends, colleagues, and partner organizations for their work in helping the FNFC to continue to advance your interests in a united and coherent voice, and express that we look forward to our continued work together.



Hych'ga Siem (Thank you),  
Jordan Point  
FNFC Executive Director

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## Salmon Coordinating Committee

The First Nations Salmon Coordinating Committee (SCC) is a province-wide advisory process consisting of delegates from the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) Regions. The committee was formed in 2011 in response to ongoing frustrations expressed by First Nations with DFO's Pacific Salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs) and Salmon Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC) processes. Over the last few years, the work of the SCC has evolved from IFMP development towards engaging in province-wide salmon management and planning initiatives. Since October 2013, the committee has participated in larger policy initiatives such as updating DFO's Commercial Salmon Allocation Framework (CSAF), and the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP).

## Mass Marking and Mark Selective Fisheries Discussion Paper

The FNFC worked with the SCC to develop a discussion paper on Mass Marking and Mark Selective Fisheries (MM/MSF) after hearing concerns and questions from many First Nations and First Nations organizations regarding potential implementation in BC. The intent of the discussion paper is to provide a high-level overview of concerns and uncertainties associated with MM/MSF from a First Nations perspective, as well as investigate further into the technical considerations of MM/MSF and application in BC fisheries. The paper also lists general recommendations as to how First Nations may want to consider the application of MM/MSF and key discussion questions that First Nations can consider to inform discussions during consultative processes.

It is important to acknowledge that potential adoption of MM/MSF in Canada is a significant fisheries management regime change and will require high level policy changes. The FNFC will continue to engage with DFO to communicate concerns raised by BC First Nations about MM/MSF and recommend that consultative processes to evaluate MM/MSF application and developing policy changes be collaborative and consistent with DFO's Reconciliation Strategy and UNDRIP.

For copies of the Discussion Paper and companion documents, please contact Janson Wong, Operations Manager, at [janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca](mailto:janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca) or 778-379-6470.

## Annual Report on Wild Salmon Policy Implementation Plan Postponed

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the *2019-20 Annual Report on the Wild Salmon Policy 2018-2022 Implementation Plan* has been postponed to June 30, 2020. The SCC will continue to work with DFO to review progress towards implementing the Wild Salmon Policy. This year, we also anticipate reviewing and updating the Wild Salmon Policy Implementation Plan to be consistent with *Fisheries Act* amendments. In conjunction with new Fish Stocks Provisions under the *Fisheries Act* amendments, the goal will be to advocate to increase efforts and support to collaborate with First Nations in rebuilding local wild salmon stocks.

More information about the Wild Salmon Policy, the Implementation Plan and related activities are available here: <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/salmon-saumon/wsp-pss/index-eng.html>

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## Interior Fraser Steelhead Project

FNFC is initiating an Interior Fraser Steelhead (IFS) project with the Province of BC and is in the early stages of planning a webinar and regional workshops with First Nations and the Province. We have heard concerns from many First Nations groups about IFS recovery and management and it was identified as one of the priorities for engagement with BC and DFO. The overarching goal of the project is to convene conversations around future management strategies for IFS. Throughout the next several months, the FNFC will be engaging with First Nations to identify priorities to ensure that conversations are structured to be relevant to local First Nations' priorities and interests. We anticipate the webinar to occur in June/July, with regional workshops to be held in August/September, depending on COVID-19 and BC's health and safety guidelines.

We look forward to sharing more information about this project in the near future. In the meantime, please feel free to contact Janson Wong, Operations Manager, at [janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca](mailto:janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca) for more information.

## Salmon Habitat Inventory Project

The FNFC is also working with the province to develop a First Nations prioritized salmon habitat inventory that will be used to identify critical salmon habitat for conservation and restoration. The FNFC will be engaging with BC First Nations and stewardship organizations throughout 2020-2021 to develop a salmon habitat database that reflects First Nations interests and increases opportunities for meaningful collaboration with the province on salmon stewardship initiatives.

For more information about this project, please feel free to contact Derek Fiddler, Economic Development Coordinator, at [derek@fnfisheriescouncil.ca](mailto:derek@fnfisheriescouncil.ca).

Photo: Salmon in Henderson River – by Sabrina Crowley.



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## Oceans Protection Plan

The FNFC-OPP Coordinating Committees held a series of virtual workshops with Federal Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) initiative leads over the months of March and April. The purpose of these workshops was to learn more about the objectives, engagement opportunities and anticipated outcomes of the proposed OPP initiatives that had been brought forward for committee consideration in February 2020.

**Workshop 1:** March 28, 2020 -

- Cumulative Effects of Marine Shipping (TC)

**Workshop 2:** April 24, 2020

- Collaborative Situational Awareness Portal (CCG)
- Co-Developing Community Response (CCG)

**Workshop 3:** April 30, 2020 (morning)

- Recovery from Environmental Emergencies (ECCC)
- National Sensitivity Emergency Centre, Sensitivity Mapping (ECCC)

**Workshop 4:** April 30, 2020 (afternoon)

- Regulatory Roundtable (TC)
- Marine Training Program (BCIT/Camosun College)
- Ship-source Oil Pollution Liability and Compensation (TC)

As a result of these workshops, the FNFC-OPP Coordinating Committees made the decision to recommend advancing the implementation of the **Recovery from Environmental Emergencies** and the **Ship-source Oil Pollution Liability and Compensation** initiatives. Committees expressed an interest in the proposed **Cumulative Effects of Marine Shipping**, **Regulatory Roundtable** and **Sensitivity Mapping** initiatives; however, it was determined that more information and collaboration with federal OPP leads is required prior to confirming a recommended approach.

Coordinating Committees agreed that the **Marine Training Program** initiative appears to be an encouraging opportunity for First Nations to participate in BCIT/Camosun College's Bridge Watch Rating program in their own communities. Funding in the amount of \$6.2 million has been awarded to BCIT/Camosun to establish this program which will operate until March 2022 with approximately 200 graduates anticipated overall. Committees determined that the Marine Training Program would be better led and directed by First Nations communities with interest in undertaking this specialized training. If you or someone you know may be interested in this training opportunity, you are encouraged to contact BCIT at [bridgewatchrating\\_enhanced@bcit.ca](mailto:bridgewatchrating_enhanced@bcit.ca) or Camosun College at [BridgeWatchRating@camosun.ca](mailto:BridgeWatchRating@camosun.ca).

If you are interested in learning more about the proposed OPP initiatives, would like to become involved in one of Coordinating Committees, or have questions related to the fulfillment of this work and the OPP, please contact Loriena Melnick at [Loriena@fnfisheriescouncil.ca](mailto:Loriena@fnfisheriescouncil.ca).

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## ***Working Together On Water – Online Forum (June/July)***

The FNFC and BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy were meant to host the Working Together on Water Forum in person on July 9-10, 2020 in Vancouver. Due to COVID-19, the forum will now take place **online in June or early July**.

The purpose of the Forum is to facilitate dialogue between First Nations and Provincial staff on opportunities to improve First Nations engagement in water management and governance, in particular with respect to the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA). The Forum will explore options to progress the 2019 [First Nations Recommendations for a New WSA Engagement Framework](#) developed by a small group of BC First Nations water policy experts, and endorsed by UBCIC, BCAFN and the First Nations Summit. We are finalizing details with the Province and will send out the agenda in the next few weeks.

The Forum is open to BC First Nations delegates with a good understanding of the WSA.

For more information, see this letter sent by FNFC to the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy RE: First Nations’ recommendations for a new WSA Engagement Framework:

[https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Letter-FNFC-to-BC\\_July-2019.pdf](https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Letter-FNFC-to-BC_July-2019.pdf)

**Registration for this event is required.** Please register online: <https://www.createsurvey.com/s/1vUgaz/>

*\*\*\*FNFC is collaborating with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy to convene this dialogue and develop the agenda and format for dialogue; however, in doing so we are not endorsing provincial policy. Our interest/mandate is to support First Nations to engage in water governance and management processes, and to advance implementation of a renewed WSA engagement framework based on the 2019 recommendations. \*\*\**

For more information, please contact *Water for Fish* Project Coordinator Geneviève Layton-Cartier at [genevieve@fnfisheriescouncil.ca](mailto:genevieve@fnfisheriescouncil.ca) or 778-379-6470.

Photo: Duus (Owikeno Lake) - by J. Walkus & Wuikinuxv Fisheries



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## Fisheries Management Issues in the Context of COVID-19:

### Issue Summary:

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant impacts to BC First Nations in many ways, including food security and economic impacts. The vast majority of First Nations communities in BC rely on fisheries and aquatic resources as integral to their cultural and social wellbeing, their identity, way of life, and food security; however, despite their constitutionally protected rights to priority access in fisheries, many First Nations communities have been unable to access adequate resources to meet their needs. While this is always a crucial issue to address – one that requires transformative change in Pacific fisheries policy and management at all levels – it becomes even more serious now during the COVID-19 pandemic as economic impacts and threats to food security make these fisheries even more important.

FNFC has sent a letter to the DFO Pacific Regional Director General (RDG), to highlight various issues around the current fisheries management regime which limits First Nations' ability to meet their food, social and ceremonial (FSC) requirements. Approximately 93 Nations have also sent correspondence to DFO indicating their chronic frustration with the current management structure and their intent to boycott or abandon DFO's Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC) / Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) process. The letter highlights the need to redesign the management regime in the context of UNDRIP, Canada's Reconciliation agenda and 10 Principles. The letter recommends advancing this issue as at the Tier 2 Joint Executive table.

### COVID-19 Economic Fisheries Impacts:

- Under Treaty, ATP and PICFI, Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Enterprises (CFEs) have experienced potential losses of approximately \$10.7 million for the year 2020.
- Commercial finfish, shellfish and groundfish have accumulated current and future losses of approximately \$5.1 million.
- First Nations aquaculture businesses and partnerships, including seaweed, shellfish, trout, tilapia, hatcheries, etc., have accumulated current and future losses of approximately \$5.6 million.

The PICFI Business Development Management Committee (BDMC) continues to meet every Friday during the COVID-19 pandemic to discuss its impact on seafood markets, food security, CFEs and aquaculture and other business aspects.

Following the announcement of the Fish Harvesters Benefit program on May 14, 2020, the BDMC identified that not everyone will meet the criteria for the new program, which is aimed at providing relief to Canada's fish harvesters who are economically impacted by the pandemic but cannot access existing federal measures. The BDMC voiced their concerns with government to modify the program design to provide relief for a broader spectrum of commercial fishers. The BDMC continues to remind CFEs to report if they see any changes in information regarding COVID-19 impacts and measures.

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## **Resources:**

- COVID-19 – Information for industry, Indigenous peoples, and other partners: <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/covid19/industry-industrie/index-eng.html>
- Information for the aquaculture industry: <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/covid19/aquaculture/index-eng.html>
- Fishery notices related to COVID-19: <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/covid-notices-avis-eng.html>
- Fish Harvester Benefit and Fish Harvester Grant (announced May 14): <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/05/14/prime-minister-announces-new-support-canadas-fish-harvesters>
- Canadian Seafood Stabilization Fund (announced April 25): <https://www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans/news/2020/04/government-of-canada-announces-new-canadian-seafood-stabilization-fund-to-help-canadas-fish-and-seafood-processing-sector.html>
- BC CDC information on food safety: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/food-safety>

## **FNFC Office Response to COVID-19:**

Like many of you, the FNFC is taking necessary precautions to keep our team, and by extension their families, safe and healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Beginning in mid-March, the FNFC's physical office was closed and staff worked mostly remotely. As the Province introduces Phase 2 of COVID-19 measures, staff are on a rotating office schedule in compliance with social distancing guidelines. FNFC's work has and will carry on uninterrupted as best as possible under the circumstances.

**Until further notice, all in-person meetings and events have been cancelled, postponed, or switched to web conference platforms such as Zoom.**

To reach our general mailbox, please email us at [info@fnfisheriescouncil.ca](mailto:info@fnfisheriescouncil.ca).

We are all in this together and we wish everyone safety, health and wellness!

**Keep up with the FNFC on Social Media!**

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