



COMMUNIQUÉ

Report finds British Columbians see value in salmon hatcheries and enhancement

Many believe economic benefits outweigh impacts to wild salmon

May 30th, 2005, Vancouver, B.C. – British Columbians believe that salmon hatcheries and enhancement activities are needed to protect wild salmon stocks but also to maintain jobs, the sport and commercial fishing industries and a sense of community in many areas of the province, according to a report released today by the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (PFRCC).

The report, entitled **Perspectives on Salmon Enhancement and Hatcheries: What the Council Heard**, also found that many people believe that negative impacts of enhancement on wild salmon have either been fixed or are wrong, misguided or irrelevant. They think habitat loss and excessive fishing are to blame, and enhancement is the only thing actually working to protect wild salmon.

The findings are based on feedback the Council received last year in a series of public consultations and meetings with key stakeholders to get their views on what should be done to improve salmon enhancement while minimizing the risks to wild salmon.

“Based on what we heard, the Council understands clearly that this is a topic people feel very passionately about, and they would rather have hatchery salmon than no salmon at all,” said Dr. Paul LeBlond, interim Chair of the PFRCC. “They believe enhancement has a role in salmon management, but that we should learn from experience to produce the best outcomes for salmon throughout British Columbia.”

Many participants strongly believe in science’s ability to provide solutions to any negative impacts that hatcheries and enhancement activities might have on wild stocks. At the same time, feedback also revealed a widespread suspicion of Fisheries and Oceans Canada might be looking for excuses for further funding cuts regardless of the merits of hatchery programs.

Public consultations were held in Prince Rupert, Nanaimo and Chilliwack in March 2004 following the Council’s release of a report on salmon hatcheries that generated considerable media coverage and public reaction. Council also met one-on-one with stakeholders upon request and received written comment from the public on the subject of hatcheries.

The report, entitled **Making Sense of the Debate about Hatchery Impacts**, found that while there have been positive outcomes from enhancement programs, wild salmon and steelhead can be negatively affected by large-scale hatchery operations and other activities intended to increase salmon numbers in B.C. It concluded that the uncertainty and risk regarding impacts on wild salmon are too high to support the current scale of enhancement activities.

The Council will be using all the information available to them including the feedback from the public consultations and stakeholder meetings to inform an advisory report it is preparing on salmon enhancement.

Established in 1998, the PFRCC is an independent body with a mandate to report annually on the status of B.C.'s salmon stocks, their habitat and related ecosystems. PFRCC reports advise the public and governments on salmon conservation issues, and provide recommendations with a long-term strategic focus.

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– 30 –

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