



COMMUNIQUÉ

Implement Wild Salmon Policy, protect all habitats, says Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council

(Vancouver – October 19, 2006) The Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (PFRCC) today issued an advisory detailing a specific plan for the federal Fisheries Department (DFO) to push forward on implementing the habitat and ecosystem strategies of the Wild Salmon Policy. The Council also called for action on pre-spawning mortality of salmon in BC waters. In addition, the Council criticized the Business Council of BC's recent attempt to have the Fisheries Act amended to take away protection from some salmon habitats.

At a news conference held beside the Adams River at the peak of this year's salmon run, PFRCC Chair Paul LeBlond announced the release of the Council's advisory titled *Implementing the Habitat and Ecosystem Components of DFO's Wild Salmon Policy*.

"Our advisory offers a detailed implementation plan, and recommends that strategies for habitat and ecosystem management be implemented together because of their overlap and as a means of saving costs," said LeBlond. "We recommend the use of broad-scale indicators throughout BC's salmon waters and more detailed monitoring where high value habitat is under threat. We stress that monitoring and management actions be linked – good management must be based on good information."

PFRCC's advisory, available at <http://www.fish.bc.ca> advocates establishment of a formal agreement between the federal and provincial governments to share data. The Council also notes need for DFO to also collaborate with First Nations, industry and salmon stewardship groups.

The Council also highlighted the need to devote more resources to studying the causes of increased mortality of Fraser River salmon between the time they enter the river and the time they spawn. In recent years the pattern has changed and pre-spawning mortality rates have been very high, sometimes approaching 90%. Some officials have suggested pre-spawning mortality rates on the Adams River, for example, will be 30 to 50% this year, up from previous rates of 5%.

"In the opinion of Council, the factors contributing to pre-spawning mortality of not only the Adams sockeye, but other late-run stocks such as the Cultus Lake populations, comprise one of the primary conservation problems in BC," said Mark Angelo, vice-chair of PFRCC. "And this is making the task of determining safe harvest levels exceedingly difficult. There needs to be a focused ecosystem approach to the issue so as to better understand the cause and manage accordingly."

The Council also took exception to a recent report by the Business Council of BC that recommended changing the Fisheries Act to remove DFO protection of certain habitats.

“We believe that more, not less, protection of wild salmon habitat is required, based on a smooth collaboration of federal and provincial agencies,” noted Angelo. “Habitat protection can be improved by adopting a management system based on specific indicators, monitoring, appropriate action and an adequately funded program, as outlined in our advisory.”

This advisory provides critical advice on the need to link monitoring to management actions so that habitat and ecosystem integrity can be maintained. The advisory describes a logical and unique eight-step framework for implementation of the habitat and ecosystem management components outlined in the Wild Salmon Policy. PFRCC is recommending broad spatial mapping of salmon distributions and high value habitat for conservation units, as well as detailed monitoring of habitat with high values at risk. The advisory also recommends management actions be undertaken to reduce if not eliminate habitat threats identified. More effort should be expended where values and risks are high but all habitat needs protection and management.

The Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council was created in 1998 to serve as a source of information to the public and advice to governments on wild Pacific salmon and steelhead and their ocean and freshwater habitats.

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BACKGROUND

October 19, 2006

PFRCC issues advisory with detailed plan to implement federal Wild Salmon Policy

The Pacific Salmon Resources Council today issued its advisory titled Implementing the Habitat and Ecosystem Components of DFO's Wild Salmon Policy.

In 2005, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) announced its Wild Salmon Policy (WSP), which strategically outlines the priority to be given to the management of wild salmon. The lack of clear implementation schemes, guidelines, measurable objectives, and other planning tools was troubling to some reviewers of the WSP including the Council. Today's advisory addresses this concern by describing an eight step adaptive framework for assessing threats to habitat, monitoring the status of salmon habitat, invoking management actions to deal with threats to salmon habitat, and monitoring the effectiveness of those actions.

The recommended framework is a new cost-effective approach to implementing the habitat and ecosystem components of the WSP. The Council recommends that strategies for habitat and ecosystem management be implemented together because of their overlap and as a means of saving costs. Council advises the use of broad scale indicators throughout BC's salmon waters and more detailed monitoring where high value habitat is under threat. The Council is stressing that monitoring and management actions be linked, with good management based on good information.

To ensure that DFO has access to extensive land-based data sets, and in recognition of the province's role in natural resource development, the advisory recommends that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the BC Minister of the Environment take advantage of the Pacific Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers to establish a formal agreement on data access and sharing. To assure success, DFO must also collaborate with First Nations, industry and salmon stewardship groups.

PFRCC notes that the challenge for the Minister in developing an appropriate habitat and ecosystem monitoring strategy for the Wild Salmon Policy is not in identifying the potential long suite of habitat and ecosystem indicators, but in developing a cost-effective, user-accessible, up-to-date monitoring program. This program must focus on the most relevant and important indicators while ensuring that the monitoring program is integrally linked to management actions to achieve the habitat objectives of the WSP.

The advisory discusses the need to give special emphasis to areas where habitat threats are most pressing, however the Council does NOT recommend budget cuts. On the contrary, the advisory stresses the need for more resources for implementation of the WSP and emphasize that habitat and ecosystem monitoring is a new activity which requires adequate resources.

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