

Marine Conservation Caucus salmon management concerns: some highlights

Prepared for meeting with Minister Ashfield, July 8, 2011

An **April 2011 Angus Reid Public Opinion Poll** found that 86% of British Columbians believe economic growth and development should not come at the cost of healthy salmon populations. Those same citizens also overwhelmingly agreed that compromising small stocks in order to harvest large ones is an unacceptable trade-off.

1. Concerns for fish habitat

- The “No net loss” policy is fundamental to protecting salmon habitat and building healthy salmon stocks, yet its success requires departmental prioritization and funding; 89% of the BC public have said laws meant to protect salmon habitat should be more strictly enforced.
- Streamlining or ‘modernizing’ the Fisheries Act at a cost to habitat protection or precautionary fisheries is also not an acceptable trade-off for British Columbians.

2. Concerns over harvest management

- Recent *conditional* certification of BC salmon fisheries by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) requires DFO to fully implement the associated *Action Plans* and *Canada’s Wild Salmon Policy (WSP)*. Getting to this stage required extensive investment by industry, government, and NGOs. The MCC has begun working with industry on this implementation, and to ensure that DFO follows through on its part to meet conditions of certification. This as an unprecedented opportunity for collaboration among these groups. Failure to meet or maintain conditions of certification would be a huge loss to Canada.
- Implementation of Wild Salmon Policy benchmarks and ecosystem objectives has stalled; both require adequate stock assessment and departmental prioritization.
- Implementation of enhanced catch and by-catch monitoring, observer programs, and third-party validation are critical parts of MSC certification, as well as other obligations Canada has made to precautionary and sustainable fisheries.

3. Concerns for departmental budget cuts

- Funding cuts hinder the Department’s ability to administer Section 36 (Habitat Protection) of the Fisheries Act. Some 52% of British Columbians said they would pay higher taxes if that was what it took to protect wild salmon habitat.
- Rigorous and current stock assessments are the cornerstone of responsible fisheries management. In the absence of adequate stock assessment, mixed-stock fisheries are risky and controversial. In-river/terminal and more selective approaches (e.g. tangle nets, fishwheels, ITQs) are more economically-prudent and risk-averse harvest strategies deserving of departmental support.
- All of the above issues are being flagged by the federal Cohen Commission; especially budget cuts, the slow pace and low priority of the WSP, sub-par stock assessment, habitat protection, and the need for enhanced monitoring of catch and by-catch in all salmon fisheries.