

Marine Conservation Caucus,  
c/o Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter  
302-733 Johnson St.  
Victoria, BC V8W 3C7

March 10, 2005

Hon. Geoff Regan  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Dear Minister Geoff Regan:

Members of the Marine Conservation Caucus (MCC) represent a large number of conservation groups in British Columbia. As you are aware, the MCC was organized to provide formal input into DFO on such matters as the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP). Over the years our members have been highly supportive of the development of a wild salmon policy that would give DFO and Canadians direction on better managing and conserving healthy populations of Pacific salmon on the West Coast of Canada.

As you and your staff know, the conservation community (and many others) have long advocated for an effective policy that recognizes and protects the importance that most Canadians place on wild salmon. It has become abundantly clear, however, that the policy your department released in December 2004 is severely flawed.

We attended the public consultations on March 2, 2005 in hopes that the MCC's major concerns would be addressed in good faith. Sadly, it became apparent early in the meeting that our written submissions would only be treated in a superficial manner. All the effort and all the ideas on how to improve the policy were not shared, not discussed in detail, and thus not given the consideration that would have allowed the participants to hopefully reach a common understanding on major flaws documented well before the workshop. Instead it was very apparent that DFO and their facilitator had organized the breakout discussions to focus on details and not on the significant flaws in the WSP. From our point of view it is impossible to deal with details until the major issues are resolved.

Despite our great concerns, and primarily because of the commitment from DFO staff to put all issues on the table, including the principles and the fact that conservation must be the overriding principle, the Marine Conservation Caucus delegates participated in several "breakout" and plenary sessions. It was our hope that the group's collective and substantive concerns would be considered. Unfortunately, we did not get a sense that the facilitation team was mandated to address the overriding principles, rationale and the major flaws in the policy. We repeatedly had to "remind" the American facilitator that these were overriding issues and were in a different category from detailed discussions and actually should precede detailed discussions. More troubling, we struggled to obtain

answers in the plenary sessions on why the policy failed to deal adequately with threats such as salmon aquaculture, lack of full habitat protection due to a 'modernized' approach, lack of resources to implement the policy, the size of conservation units, and other concerns shared by many. It ultimately became apparent to us that by intentionally glossing over and/or relegating these issues to minor items on flip chart summaries we could no longer participate in what we believed to be a flawed process to legitimize a flawed policy.

Accordingly the MCC delegates painfully reviewed where the workshop was proceeding and after careful consideration we decided to respectfully leave the workshop before the first day ended.

We do acknowledge that after we raised our major concerns about the process that the DFO representatives at the meeting made an announcement that discussion of the overriding principles and the major flaws in the document would also be on the table and that we would have the opportunity to publicly review and comment on the next amended draft. However, the workshop was not restructured to address these major considerations.

We consider the Wild Salmon Policy to be the most important document that your department will produce for some time to come. It is an historic moment in our history. Let's do it right. In that light, and recognizing the potential importance of the policy to fully protect wild salmon and their habitat, we stand by our decision, and enclose for all our original list of critical flaws and proposed solutions.

We must also remain hopeful that you demonstrate the leadership promised by Prime Minister Paul Martin, and that we will eventually see a Wild Salmon Policy that is both enduring and effective and a credit to Canada and all Canadians who care about the protection of wild salmon..

Sincerely,  
Marine Conservation Caucus delegates;

Vicky Husband; Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter; Co-chair MCC  
Otto Langer; David Suzuki Foundation  
Nicola Temple; Raincoast Conservation Society  
David Lane; T. Buck Suzuki Foundation/CAAR  
Elaine Golds; Burke Mountain Naturalists  
Craig Orr; Watershed Watch Salmon Society; Co-chair MCC

Cc: Larry Murray; Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Paul Sprout; Director General, Pacific Region  
Brian Riddell; Operations Officer, Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Mark Saunders; Wild Salmon Policy Coordinator  
Jay Hartling; Head, Consultation