



January 30, 2018

RE: MCC input on Chinook and SRKW conservation measures for 2018 IFMP

Hon. Dominic Leblanc  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Dear Minister Leblanc:

This letter and the attached paper reflect the Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus' (MCC) input to the 2018 salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plan with respect to immediate and necessary actions to conserve endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW). These measures are focused on increasing the accessibility and abundance of Chinook salmon. Additional input will be provided by the MCC regarding other components of the 2018 Pacific salmon IFMPs and we are sharing this input with you and Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff given the urgency of the issue and the government's focus on the recovery of endangered whales. This letter and attachment replaces similar input provided by Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Watershed Watch Salmon Society that you received late December 2017. This input is complimentary to the emergency order petition you have received from Ecojustice Canada, with two of our groups (David Suzuki Foundation and Raincoast Conservation Foundation) signatories to that petition.

In summary, the latest available science and discussions amongst killer whale scientists clearly demonstrate an immediate need to implement area-based SRKW feeding refuges and reduce the overall catch in Chinook fisheries coastwide.

Recommendations detailed in the attached paper include:

1. Implement SRKW Feeding Refuges that will allow SRKWs to successfully forage in critical feeding habitats without noise and disturbance from recreational fishing and whale watching activities.
2. Implement commercial and recreational fishing restrictions to increase the abundance of Chinook in habitats identified as critical to SRKW, other important SRKW feeding areas, and for Chinook populations known to be important in the diets of SRKWs.
3. Manage Chinook in accordance with 1) and 2) until the health of SRKWs (as determined by photogrammetry, pregnancies, hormones, vital rates or other proxies) indicates a high likelihood whales are recovering.
4. Implement recovery plans consistent with Canada's *Guidance for the Development of Rebuilding Plans under the Precautionary Approach Framework* to rebuild B.C. Chinook populations (i.e. Conservation Units below their Spawner Maximum Sustainable Yield (Smsy) with the objective of maximizing Chinook recruitment to terminal areas and spawning grounds (Rmax).

## **SRKW Feeding Refuges**

The attached paper provides a map outlining key feeding refuges within the identified Southern Resident Killer Whale critical habitat that must be closed to all fishing activity and other small vessel disturbance throughout the spring/summer SRKW feeding period (i.e., April through September). These proposed feeding refuges have been developed with the assistance of leading SRKW scientists.

Implementation of these refuges must occur in 2018, cover the full range of foraging areas, and be implemented for a minimum of five years to ensure an adequate period to evaluate effectiveness. Partial implementation of only some of these refuges, or for a period of less than five years, would fail to adequately provide the immediate protection SRKW require and lack the rigour necessary to monitor whether they result in key performance metrics of SRKW recovery (e.g., body condition).

## **Coastwide Chinook Catch Reductions**

The attached paper also provides a comprehensive proposal for increasing the abundance of Chinook salmon available for SRKW feeding through both immediate term reductions in catch and the development and implementation of stock-based escapement goals consistent with Chinook rebuilding.

For the 2018 fishing season, at minimum, there must be a significant reduction in south coast Chinook harvest in the spring and early summer period (i.e., March through June). These fisheries target highly depleted Fraser Chinook stocks that are a key food resource for SRKW at one of their most vulnerable periods.

## **Summary**

We have been encouraged by your government's recent emphasis on the need to recover Southern Resident Killer Whales. The input provided within this letter and attached paper provides a clear roadmap for addressing the prey availability component of their recovery based on the best available science and drawing on the latest dialogue and conversations with your department. We trust that you will implement effective SRKW recovery measures in the 2018 Salmon Integrated Harvest Management Plans.

We also request an opportunity to meet with your staff and Andrew Thompson of the Pacific Region to provide more detailed supporting commentary on this input.

Sincerely,



Jeffery Young  
David Suzuki Foundation  
On Behalf of the Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus, Salmon Subcommittee



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