

**Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries**  
**BRIEFING NOTE FOR DEPUTY MINISTER FOR INFORMATION**

Ref: 194918

Date: May 28, 2021

**Title:** Meeting with Rick Hansen and Tony Allard

**Issue:** Rick Hansen and Tony Allard wish to provide updates and discuss their interests in salmon aquaculture, and wild salmon and sturgeon conservation in British Columbia.

**Background:** Tony Allard is the President of Wild Salmon Forever (WSF) and the owner and proprietor of Good Hope Cannery Lodge, a private sport-fishing lodge in Rivers Inlet. Mr. Allard also supports the Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) and the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project (SSMSP). He has made multiple large donations to fund initiatives and research into declining wild salmon populations, including pledging \$250,000 to the SSMSP. Mr. Allard has been an outspoken critic of salmon aquaculture in B.C. and brought that position to his appointment as a member of the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Council on Finfish Aquaculture (MAACFA) through 2017-2018

Rick Hansen is the founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation and a passionate supporter of people with disabilities in Canada and the conservation of sturgeon and salmon ecosystems. He formed, and is the current Chair of, the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society (FRSCS) and helped form the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society (PSEFS) where he is a former board member. Rick has recently discussed the need for improved accessibility to angling opportunities, including infrastructure investments of the Freshwater Fisheries Society of B.C. and the Rec Sites and Trails program. Mr. Hansen and the FRSCS are strong and passionate advocates for sustainable management of fish, with a focus on sturgeon and salmon. Mr. Hansen regularly meets with both Federal and Provincial elected officials and staff. The primary focus typically is advocacy for changes to restore and sustain salmon and sturgeon, with fishing accessibility needs as another primary topic. In 2020, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) provided a \$250K partnership grant to the FRSCS to assist the Province in conducting 2021 engagement with Indigenous Nations and stakeholders to inform a B.C. Fraser River Sturgeon Management Plan.

Rick Hansen and Tony Allard have provided an agenda of topics they wish to discuss in the meeting:

- Introducing Tony Allard to further discuss salmon aquaculture in B.C.;
- Perspective of Tony Allard/Wild First on salmon aquaculture;
- Update on federal government position;
- Update from Tom on the provincial perspective on salmon aquaculture;
- Federal government budget commitment on salmon for this year; and
- Sturgeon conservation updates.

**First Nations Considerations:** One third of fish harvesting jobs are in First Nation communities and 78 percent of B.C.'s farmed salmon production comes from areas covered by economic and social partnerships with First Nations. In B.C.'s four largest salmon farming companies, 30 percent of the jobs are staffed by First Nations.

**Discussion:**

Salmon Aquaculture: Tony Allard and Wild Salmon Forever have been long-time proponents of removing open net-pen salmon farms from B.C. waters. In the current context of the federal 2025 Transition Plan, Broughton Implementation, and Discovery Islands decision, there is increased public attention to the notion of removing salmon farms. While there are uncertainties around the specifics of any future transition, land-based aquaculture and Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) usually feature in discussions and will likely be raised by Mr. Allard and Mr. Hansen.

High capital cost remains the single most significant barrier to developing land-based closed-containment systems to produce market-size Atlantic salmon as profitability is dependent on large economies of scale. Current estimates suggest the capital cost to build a RAS system is between \$7 to \$14 million per metric ton (mt) of production for sites producing 5,000 to 10,000 mt respectively. In contrast, the capital cost of a net-pen is estimated at \$2.3 million per mt. The Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation (JERI) is a partner in efforts to raise awareness and investment in the RAS and land-based aquaculture sectors in B.C.

Pacific Salmon: Mr. Hansen has previously expressed to provincial ministry staff his vision for a third party (non-government) to lead salmon recovery efforts, likely the PSF, and may advocate this vision once again. DFO and the Province are concurrently working on strategies to recover wild salmon populations through restoring their habitats, hatcheries, and other means. These efforts include working to double the size of the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF). Effort will be taken to step up protection of fish habitat with the Watershed Security Strategy and habitat themes within the provincial salmon strategy. Outreach and engagement on the strategy is expected to occur over the coming months.

Sturgeon: As a freshwater species, sturgeon are a provincial responsibility (FLNR lead). However, the Province can only manage the portion of the population above the Mission Bridge as below that they are in the area designated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) as "tidal", and the Province does not have jurisdiction. DFO is currently conducting a *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) listing review on Upper Fraser and Lower Fraser Sturgeon with participation from the Province.

The currently approved catch-and-release recreational sturgeon fishery provides approximately \$30M to the local economy annually and is regularly reviewed as it must not undermine recovery goals. In spring 2019, the Province established regulated fishing closures on the three highest-value spawning sites with no catch-and-release fisheries allowed.

**Suggested Response:**

- **B.C. recognizes the value of wild Pacific salmon stocks and their importance to commercial and recreational user groups, and all First Nations and British Columbians.**
- **B.C. is keen on hearing any insights Mr. Allard may have from his recent discussions with the Nations and the federal government regarding wild salmon and aquaculture.**
- **The B.C. government supports the evaluation and use of innovative technologies like closed containment to explore new markets and build on B.C.'s reputation as a provider of great-tasting, sustainable seafood.**
- **B.C. is actively working towards new initiatives to assist salmon recovery. We look forward to working with partners like the Rick Hansen Foundation and Wild Salmon Forever.**

**Contact:** Tyson Carswell, Senior Policy Analyst, FAWSB, 778-698-4056

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**Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries**  
**BRIEFING NOTE FOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**

Ref: 194974

Date: June 7, 2021

**Title:** Meeting with Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Rick Hansen, founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation

**Issue:** Rick Hansen would like to provide updates and discuss interests in salmon aquaculture and the conservation of wild salmon and sturgeon in British Columbia.

**Background:** Rick Hansen is the founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) and a passionate supporter of people with disabilities in Canada and the conservation of sturgeon and salmon ecosystems. He formed, and is the current Chair of, the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society (FRSCS) and helped form the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society (PSEFS) where he is a former board member. Rick has recently discussed the need for improved accessibility to angling opportunities, including infrastructure investments of the Freshwater Fisheries Society of B.C. and the Rec Sites and Trails program. Mr. Hansen and the FRSCS are strong and passionate advocates for sustainable management of fish, with a focus on sturgeon and salmon. Mr. Hansen regularly meets with both federal and provincial elected officials and staff. The primary focus typically is advocating for changes to restore and sustain salmon and sturgeon, with fishing accessibility needs as another primary topic. In 2020, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) provided a \$250K partnership grant to the FRSCS to assist the Province in conducting the 2021 engagement with Indigenous Nations and stakeholders to inform a B.C. Fraser River Sturgeon Management Plan.

**First Nations Considerations:** In a previous meeting, Mr. Hansen described overwhelming support from First Nations across the coast for removing open net-pen salmon farms and transitioning to land, but that more work would need to be done with the Nations who are in support of continued open net-pen salmon farming operations in their territorial waters. One-third of fish harvesting jobs are in First Nation communities and 78 percent of B.C.'s farmed salmon production comes from areas covered by economic and social partnerships with First Nations. In B.C.'s four largest salmon farming companies, 30 percent of the jobs are staffed by First Nations.

**Discussion:** This meeting purpose is to discuss a more collaborative and inter-governmental approach to salmon and sturgeon conservation in British Columbia, as well as to discuss the RHF's accessibility certification (RHFAC) program. Rick Hansen and Tony Allard of Wild Salmon Forever recently met with Deputy Minister (DM) Ethier and Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) McGuire where they discussed the importance of sustainable aquaculture and wild salmon recovery. They described the social movement focused on open net-pen impacts on wild salmon, and a desire to scale up the land-based aquaculture industry and sustainable shellfish and seaweed aquaculture operations. At this meeting, they also discussed federal

and provincial positions on wild salmon and aquaculture, the federal budget commitments for salmon, and sturgeon conservation. Mr. Hansen advocated for the Province to be more involved in influencing the federal wild salmon processes regardless of jurisdiction.

In the current context of the federal 2025 Transition Plan, Broughton Implementation, and Discovery Islands decision, there is increased public attention to the notion of removing salmon farms. While there are uncertainties around the specifics of any future transition, land-based aquaculture and Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) usually feature in discussions and will likely be raised by Mr. Hansen. High capital cost remains the single most significant barrier to developing land-based closed-containment systems to produce market-size Atlantic salmon as profitability is dependent on large economies of scale. Current estimates suggest the capital cost to build a RAS system is between \$7 to \$14 million per metric ton (mt) of production for sites producing 5,000 to 10,000 mt respectively. In contrast, the capital cost of a net-pen is estimated at \$2.3 million per mt. The Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation (JERI) is a partner in efforts to coordinate investment in RAS in B.C.

Pacific Salmon: Mr. Hansen has previously expressed his vision for a third party (non-government) entity to lead salmon recovery efforts, likely the PSF, and may advocate this vision once again. DFO and the Province are concurrently working on strategies to recover wild salmon populations through restoring habitats, utilizing hatcheries, and other means. These efforts include working to double the size of the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF). Efforts will be taken to step up protection of fish habitat with the Watershed Security Strategy and habitat themes within a provincial Wild Salmon Restoration Strategy (WSRS). Outreach and engagement on the WSRS is expected to occur over the coming months ideally in a coordinated manner with other provincial and federal strategies.

Sturgeon: As a freshwater species, sturgeon is a provincial responsibility (FLNR). The currently approved catch-and-release recreational sturgeon fishery provides approximately \$30M to the local economy annually and is regularly reviewed. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is currently conducting a *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), listing the review on Upper and Lower Fraser Sturgeon with participation from the Province.

#### **Suggested Response:**

- **B.C. recognizes the value of wild Pacific salmon stocks and their importance to commercial and recreational user groups, and all First Nations.**
- **B.C. is keen on hearing any insights Mr. Hansen may have from his recent discussions with First Nations and the federal government regarding wild salmon.**
- **The B.C. government supports the evaluation and use of innovative technologies like closed containment to explore new markets and build on B.C.'s reputation as a provider of great-tasting, sustainable seafood.**
- **B.C. is actively working towards new initiatives to assist salmon recovery. We look forward to working with partners like the Rick Hansen Foundation.**

Contact: Kevin Romanin, Senior Policy Analyst – Fisheries & Aquaculture, 778-974-4884

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