

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

Ref: 195898

Date: November 30, 2021

**Title:** Lower Mainland Flood Management Strategy.

**Issue:** Parliamentary Secretary Donnelly has been invited by Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil and Aaron Hill, Watershed Watch Salmon Society to discuss concerns and solutions regarding the Lower Mainland Flood Management Strategy.

**Background:** Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil, Chair of the Emergency Planning Secretariat Interim Leadership Committee (EPS ILC) and Aaron Hill, Executive Director, Watershed Watch Salmon Society (WWSS) wrote to Parliamentary Secretary Donnelly (PSD) (Appendix 1) requesting a meeting to discuss their concerns over the management of the Lower Mainland Flood Management Strategy (LMFMS). Key issues they identified include lack of meaningful inclusion of the environment or First Nations values; failure to uphold the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA); lack of transparency, and a flawed engagement process. As a result, EPS ILC has resigned from their role on the LMFMS, and Watershed Watch Salmon Society has expressed concerns regarding the process.

EPS ILC and WWSS have indicated they have possible solutions for the LMFMS which they note is still in Draft form. EPS ILC have also noted that if the concerns outlined above are not address in future versions of the LMFMS "at a minimum it will be a challenge to seek endorsement of such a plan by Lower Mainland First Nations".

The Fraser Basin Council serve as the secretariate for the LMFM process which began in 2014. The stated purpose of the LMFM is to reduce flood risk and improving the flood resilience of communities along BC's lower Fraser River and south coast from Hope to Richmond and from Squamish to White Rock. Participants in the LMFMS include the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia, Lower Mainland local governments, First Nations, and non-governmental and private sector entities in the region. LMFM is currently in phase 2 of a 3-stage process. Phase 2 is focused on developing a long-term strategy, phase 3 which is planned to start in 2022, would be the implementation phase.

**First Nations Considerations:** The Emergency Planning Secretariat (est. 2019) works with 31 Mainland Coast Salish First Nations to improve emergency planning and preparedness, as well as to ensure First Nations participation in all activities related to emergency planning. One of the EPS's first tasks was to participate in the Lower Mainland Flood Management Strategy (LMFMS) coordinated by the Fraser Basin Council to remedy the lack of involvement of First Nations in the process.

**Discussion:** The lower Fraser River watershed is important rearing and overwintering habitat for juvenile salmon. WWSS has identified over 1,500 km of potential habitat disconnected

from the main stem of the Fraser River by 150+ flood gates, pump stations, and dikes. WWSS has indicated that much of this flood control infrastructure requires replacement due to reaching end of life and/or impending climate change impacts such as increased flooding and sea level rise. With the current impacts of the floods, this issue, and the opportunity to remedy the fish-unfriendly infrastructure of the past will likely be forefront of discussions.

B.C. is developing the Wild Salmon Strategy and Action Plan (WSSAP) that will work to restore wild salmon populations in partnership with Indigenous Nations and the Federal Government. Fish passage and habitat restoration is expected to be a component of the WSSAP. B.C. is also developing a Watershed Security Strategy and Fund (WSS+F) that may address issues related to flood control. Details are not yet clear on either strategy; however, fish friendly flood control will likely remain in scope and could inform funding priorities through programs like the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF). BCSRIF supported the Resilient Waters project phase 1, by providing funding, \$598,755, (Nov 2019-December 2021) which focusses on identifying, prioritizing, and scoping of opportunities for flood control infrastructure upgrades and fish habitat restoration opportunities. Based on the preliminary results from Phase 1, it is anticipated that Phase 2 of Resilient Waters project (September 2021-March 2024) will receive additional BCSRIF funding of ~\$2.6M. WWSS, who is a partner in the project, may hold an event to mark the next phase of the project in December 2021 in which PSD may participate.

B.C. participates in LMFMS through the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNR). FLNR staff who are engaged in LMFMS are currently responding to the provincial flood emergency and were unable to provide input to this note at the time of writing.

**Suggested Response:**

- **I hope your communities have fared well in the recent floods. Our government is here to support the rebuilding effort and building back better.**
- **Thank you for bringing these important issues regarding the Lower Mainland Flood Management Strategy (LMFMS) to my attention.**
- **I am pleased that there is still a window of opportunity to ensure Mainland Coast Salish First Nations participation is made a priority.**
- **There has never been a greater need for this work, as we have all seen with the impacts of the recent floods.**

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Contact: Rebecca Wardle, Senior Policy Analyst, 236-478-2417

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

Ref: 196681

Date: November 23, 2021

**Title:** Meeting Request to Discuss Agricultural Stewardship for Watersheds with Regional Representatives.

**Issue:** Wayne Salewski, Chair of the Nechako White Sturgeon Community Working Group, has requested to meet with Parliamentary Secretary Donnelly to discuss watershed stewardship for farms and ranches.

**Background:**

Mr. Salewski has asked Parliamentary Secretary Donnelly and the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries to discuss policy changes that could incentivize stewardship for farms and ranches that would benefit watersheds. Other meeting participants may include Mark Parker, Vice Chair Electoral Area D (Fraser Lake Rural), Regional District of Bulkley Nechako, and Lara Beckett, Director, Chilako River-Nechako, Regional District Fraser Fort George.

Mr. Salewski indicates in his e-mail that he, along with Mr. Parker and Ms. Beckett, belong to a small agricultural community group that formed last year to discuss overarching agriculture sustainability issues, specifically how to achieve positive results for the watershed they farm and ranch on.

Mr. Salewski was part of a group, the Mid Upper Fraser Salmon Collaborative, that applied for BCSRIF funds to support a ~\$8.2M project call "Mid/Upper Fraser River Salmon Collaborative". The Expression of Interest did not receive a request for a full project proposal due in part to its high cost and proposed scope of work.

**First Nations Considerations:**

First Nations make up a significant proportion of B.C.'s commercial fishers, as well as have economic interests in tidal sportfishing and aquaculture. Additionally, most B.C. First Nation communities have strong cultural and social ties to salmon and the marine environment consecrated in a Constitutional right to harvest fish.

**Discussion:** B.C. is developing a Wild Salmon Strategy and Action Plan (WSSAP) that will work to restore wild salmon populations in partnership with Indigenous Nations and the Federal Government. Fish passage and habitat restoration is expected to be a component of the WSSAP. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV) and Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) are also developing a Watershed Security Strategy and Fund (WSS+F) and Coastal Marine Strategy, respectively. Details are not yet clear on either strategy; however, watershed security and benefits for salmon will likely remain in scope and could inform funding priorities through programs like the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF).

BCSRIF is currently supporting the Farmland Riparian Interface Stewardship Program (FRISP) delivered by British Columbia Cattlemen's Association (Details in Appendix 1). The \$500K project was approved in 2019 and started July 15, 2019 and is scheduled to be completed March 31, 2024. FRISP is providing technical advisor assistance to create positive changes to the relationship between agriculture and other resource stakeholders who have a vested interest in restoring and protecting wild salmon and their habitat in the Central and Upper Fraser River Watershed as well as the Skeena. The BC Cattlemen's Association is working to promote long-term environmental stewardship and sustainability for ranching families and their community to:

- facilitate the restoration and enhancement of farmland related to the management of watersheds and their associated riparian corridors;
- promote cooperative planning of riparian/fish habitat restoration activities between landowners, resource management agencies, and community groups to avoid conflict;
- increase awareness of the interactions between farmland use, fish habitat and other wildlife values associated with riparian and aquatic resources; and
- resolve conflicts that may arise between landowners and resource agencies.

Additionally, earlier this year, the Province, (led by ENV), invested \$27M in more than 60 watershed restoration and conservation projects through the Watersheds BC component of B.C.'s Economic Recovery Plan. With support from the Healthy Watershed Initiative, also funded by the Watersheds BC component of the B.C Economic Recovery Plan, 32 riparian sites on farmland were targeted for restoration activities and receipt of payments through ecosystem services through the Farmland Advantage program, administered by Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF). MAFF staff provide in kind support for Farmland Advantage and sit on the Provincial Steering Committee and Internal Program Committee.

AFF also supports the farming and ranching sectors with riparian stewardship activities through provision of funds for the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) and Beneficial Management Practices (BMP) programs. Funding for restoration and rehabilitation activities on agricultural land is provided on a cost-share basis for those farmers who complete an EFP and are successful applicants through the BMP program. Activities may include riparian exclusion fencing, alternative watering systems, riparian habitat establishment, improved stream crossings and erosion control structures.

Finally, AFF is embarking on the development of an Agricultural Watercourse Stewardship Strategy (AWSS) with the goal of enhancing watercourse stewardship on agriculture lands in B.C. We are working closely with FLNR, ENV, the Agricultural Land Commission, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the agricultural community to meet the following objectives:

- Learn about barriers, challenges and operational realities experienced by agricultural landowners in stewarding watercourses and riparian areas,
- Identify opportunities to address some of the concerns raised by agricultural landowners, and

- Develop an AWSS proposal using a multi-stakeholder and cross-jurisdictional process to address the barriers to watercourse stewardship on agricultural land, laying out steps to short-, medium- and long-term implementation.

**Suggested Response:**

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