

## MEETING NOTE

**DATE:** September 8, 2023

**PREPARED FOR:** Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

**REGARDING:** Watershed Security Fund, Wild Pacific Salmon and 2025 Net-Pen Transition Plan

### Overall Key Message (s):

- BC is here to be a collaborative partner and looks forward to working together bilaterally, and through forums such as the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers.
- We find ourselves in a unique moment where BC and Canada are highly aligned in our commitment to protect and restore wild salmon and watersheds. We must ensure that we are working as trusted friends to not only leverage our efforts but amplify our messages and build off each other's strengths. This means including us in policy development process and ensuring that communication is early, frequent and open. It is BC's belief that this coupled with working with Indigenous Communities will have a profound impact on wild salmon recovery and improved watershed security.

### En Francais

- La Colombie-Britannique est ici pour être un partenaire de collaboration et a hâte de travailler ensemble de manière bilatérale et dans le cadre de forums tels que le Conseil canadien des ministres des pêches et de l'aquaculture.
- Nous nous trouvons à un moment unique où la Colombie-Britannique, et le Canada sont tout à fait alignés sur leur engagement à protéger et à restaurer le saumon sauvage. Nous devons nous assurer que nous travaillons en tant qu'amis de confiance non seulement pour tirer parti de nos efforts, mais aussi pour amplifier nos messages et développer les forces de chacun. Cela signifie nous inclure dans le processus d'élaboration des politiques et veiller à ce que la communication soit précoce, fréquente et ouverte. La Colombie-Britannique est convaincue que cela, associé à la collaboration avec les communautés autochtones, aura un impact profond sur le rétablissement du saumon sauvage.

### **WILD PACIFIC SALMON/ BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF)**

#### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

- The provincial government has a shared interest with Canada to protect wild salmon.
- We are very pleased with what the Federal and Provincial government have achieved together through two rounds of investment BCSRIF for a total of \$285.7M. This has resulted in concrete benefits to salmon including the physical restoration of over 3,358,500 m2 of fish habitat and creation of over a thousand jobs.
- Most contribution agreements are now completed, with the remainder expected to be complete in October. There is an excellent communication opportunity for us to show to British Columbians that our two governments are working together to save wild salmon.
- s. 16  
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- Moving forward, BC is actioning its wild salmon work through ensuring wild salmon are a key value reflected in the Watershed Security Strategy and \$100M Fund (WSS&F) and the Coastal Marine Strategy (CMS). We also recently granted \$17.25M the Pacific Salmon Foundation and First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) as we appreciate that to protect and restore wild salmon in BC we need all members of society contributing and working together.

- It is important to note that both BC and Canada have included a commitment in their respective Declaration Act Action plans to collaborate with First Nations on wild salmon strategies. Our officials have been working with First Nations Fisheries Council to develop a proposed Call to Action to protect wild salmon. The draft proposal will be going to First Nations leadership organizations, as well as us as Ministers, for approval this fall. This could be a significant deliverable in advancing a Government-to-Government-Government approach in saving wild salmon.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- s. 12, s. 13, s. 16, s. 17  
s. 12, s. 13, s. 16, s. 17
- s. 13, s. 16  
s. 13, s. 16

**SUMMARY:**

- The \$647-million Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) was launched by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in June 2021, with the goal of stemming the severe and ongoing decline of key Pacific salmon populations on Canada's West Coast and restoring them to a sustainable level for future generations of Canadians. There is no indication whether the PSSI will be renewed after 2026.
- s. 16
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## 2025 NET-PEN TRANSITION PLAN

**STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

- Canada's decisions on the future of BC salmon farming have important implications regarding protecting wild salmon and the economic future for coastal communities and First Nations.
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- Staff are continuing to engage with federal counterparts however DFO staff have communicated there has been no signal or direction on what the new Minister's vision for the transition plan might be, or if there is a change in direction to staff approach so far.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) staff have dedicated significant time to participating in federal Transition Plan meetings and engaging in other discussions with stakeholders and First Nations.

**SUMMARY:**

- The Honourable Diane LeBouthillier now assumes responsibility to deliver a 2025 Net-Pen Transition Plan that was first announced in 2019 and a mandate of then Minister Bernadette Jordan, and as guided more recently by Minister Joyce Murray.
- The Transition Plan must be based on adequate First Nations consultation and engagement, be guided by socioeconomic analysis, and the federal government must provide supports to affected communities that rely on the sector.

**WATERSHED SECURITY FUND****STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

- BC is facing a water crisis, exacerbated by a changing climate, that is reflected in reduced rainfall and declining snowpack. Over the last few years, BC's watersheds have been severely impacted by the compounding effects of drought, flood, and wildfires.
- Impacts on our water system are compromising our housing growth, economic opportunities, food security, wild salmon, and BC's clean electricity.
- These are not small, localized problems. Because of climate change, this water crisis is becoming significant, long term, and province wide. We need to tackle climate adaptation for water on a similar scale of effort as decarbonizing our economy. This requires significant federal investment.
- BC is co-developing with First Nations a Watershed Security Strategy that will improve watershed resiliency by enhancing watershed governance, developing policy and legislative tools to address scarcity and its impacts, and implementing collaborative water planning to support water security. As we lose glaciers and snowpack, and as precipitation patterns change, we will need significant infrastructure investments to manage our water security.
- Canada's leadership on priorities such as adapting to climate change, developing a Canada Water Agency, the Pacific Salmon Strategic Initiative, and updating legislation for on-reserve drinking water are all opportunities to partner with BC on a water secure future.
- In March 2023, BC made a first investment of \$100M in a Watershed Security Fund that is being co-developed with First Nations. This Fund needs to be increased in order to meet the scale of water challenges facing BC. Current estimates suggest a minimum of \$1B Fund is required to support strategic investments in infrastructure, recovery, and watershed resilience.
- s. 13, s. 16
- s. 13, s. 16
- Through the Strategy, together Canada and BC can make significant progress in addressing the short-term water crisis, and the long-term need for resilient watersheds.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- The current \$100M investment is a first step in support of long-term watershed health. Sustained funding means that annual expenditure will focus on the interest earned on the initial \$100M endowment, estimated at \$5-7M annually.
- Additional annual investment is needed to support sustained watershed health for BC.



## **SUMMARY:**

- Further funding across governments and the private sector is needed to grow the Fund for a significant long-term annual investment in watersheds.
- The current drought and wildfire situation reflect declining watershed resiliency across BC and signal an opportunity for early investment in approaches to governance and planning that support watershed resiliency, in addition to funding watershed restoration and infrastructure initiatives through the Watershed Security Strategy.

## **Additional topics of interest:**

### **NORTHERN SHELF BIOREGION (NSB) – MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) NETWORK**

#### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

- Canada, the Province, and some Pacific North Coast Nations have worked to develop a Draft Network Action Plan to develop a network of MPAs in the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) which was endorsed by all participating governments in January. Work has now shifted to implementation.
- In December 2021, DFO paused the release of the latest draft scenario and reports for engagement, citing a need to rectify their ability to manage the fisheries. This was viewed very negatively by First Nation partners, but positively by harvest sectors and some First Nations with strong commercial fishing interests.
- DFO is now developing management measures based on the conservation objectives of each site, and as part of the phased implementation approach.
- While there are other challenges remaining to be addressed through the MPA network implementation process, including stakeholder impacts and concerns, the Province continues to support reconciliation and moving forward on this work.
- The Province provided a \$60-million Northern Shelf Bioregion grant to Coast Conservation Endowment Fund Foundation (“Coast Funds”) at the end of fiscal 2022/23 to complement the ongoing development of a Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) initiative for this area (also known as the “Great Bear Sea”) in conjunction with contributions from the Government of Canada and third-party investors. A public announcement of this funding is anticipated in fall 2023 prior to the First Nations Leadership Gathering.
- To support this work the Parties have established an MPA-PFP Table as a forum for aligning existing and new work. Lead Coordinators have been identified from each of the Parties including the Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy & Planning Division of WLRS for the Province, DFO representing the Government of Canada (with Environment and Climate Change Canada [ECCC] and Parks Canada Agency [PCA] as core participants) and Partner First Nations represented by the Coast Solutions Task Group.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- A grant of \$60 million to Coast Funds to support long-term financing for stewardship initiatives in the Great Bear Sea region.

## **SUMMARY:**

- DFO must determine how the overarching Network objectives and proposed management measures can complement DFO’s fisheries management processes and vice versa. BC will continue to be a committed partner with on this file.

## **CSSP/SHELLFISH AS IT RELATES TO FN FOOD SECURITY:**

### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

- The Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP) is a federal food safety program jointly administered by DFO, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and ECCC.
- One of the primary functions supporting the CSSP is water quality testing in harvest areas (by ECCC).
- Lack of adequate funding for the CSSP is an issue in BC and across Canada.
- Development of shellfish aquaculture, and expansion of opportunities for many BC Coastal First Nations is viewed as being constrained due to lack of water quality testing, or infrastructure to clean-up water sources.
- BC is hopeful that CSSP will be provided increased capacity and revisited with the lens of the federal UNDA to make sure it is working for First Nations.
- I recognize that CSSP is a shared program with Canada Food Inspection Agency and Environment Canada, but DFO is the lead federal department on shellfish, and we expect DFO to provide adequate capacity for this integral program.
- Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers (CCFAM) may be a good place to raise this issue again as it is an issue and program of national importance.
- We want to ensure there is not a systemic barrier to ensuring FN have access to healthy shellfish harvest opportunities and that all governments are working together to remediate point source pollution issues.

### **SUMMARY:**

- CSSP is a shared program with Canada Food Inspection Agency and Environment Canada, but DFO is the lead federal department on shellfish and should provide adequate capacity for this integral program.

## **EMERGENCIES (FLOOD AND DROUGHT) AS IT RELATES TO SALMON:**

### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

#### **Flood**

- In response to the November 2021 Atmospheric River event and the resulting impacts to salmon, we have worked with First Nations and DFO to stand up a 3G governance structure in each of the impacted areas (Nicola and Lower Fraser).
- The teams are actively working on coordinated salmon recovery. Having a 3G structures allows us to marry the western science with the local and traditional knowledge from FN. Further, it enables the inclusion of cultural and spiritual values or areas to ensure management approaches are culturally appropriate.
- An MOU has been built which supports collaborative outcomes for WLRs and DFO.

#### **Drought**

- DFO has been supporting provincial drought response actions by:
  - participating in provincial and regional drought committees,
  - providing support for Temporary Protection Orders under the WSA to curtail water use,
  - monitoring and providing population and migration updates to the province to support management action, and
  - working with the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the province to support on the ground mitigation actions for salmon in this drought (example: creating deep water refugia).

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- Wild salmon work has been funded via Contingencies (BCSRIF) and other sources like the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation's Indigenous Funding Envelope (for trilateral work).

## SUMMARY:

- This collaborative work and leadership from DFO on floods and drought to date has been helpful and effective in assisting wild salmon, which both our governments are committed to. We must expand on these efforts as the effects of climate change will continue to challenge salmon and steelhead in the foreseeable future.

## **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (INVASIVE MUSSELS):**

### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:**

- BC's top Aquatic Invasive Species priority continues to be invasive mussels; this is also top priority across western Canada (YK, AB, SK and MB).
- Zebra and quagga mussels pose significant economic risks due to their impacts on infrastructure and to native freshwater species. A 2023 study quantified the economic risk to BC if invasive mussels were to establish in our waters to be \$64-\$129M/year.
- The Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) was launched in 2015 to prevent the introduction of zebra and quagga mussels through the use of watercraft inspection stations, lake monitoring, and outreach.
- The recent confirmed detection of quagga mussels in southern Idaho is very concerning. This heightens the importance of Canada stepping up to mitigate the risks of this federally regulated aquatic invasive species at the Canada-US border.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- IMDP recognizes the ongoing funding provided by BC Hydro, the Columbia Power Corporation, Fortis BC, the Columbia Basin Trust, as well as the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) that makes this program possible.
- Despite new partners (DFO and Ministry of Agriculture) BC Hydro's contributions fell from \$1.25M (2016-2020) to \$350K, making maintaining stable funding a challenge.
- The Program welcomed DFO support in 2022 with their contribution of \$475k.
- Negotiations are underway for the DFO contribution for 2023; a reduced contribution is expected.

## SUMMARY:

- BC looks forward to solidifying DFO's 2023 IMDP contribution in the near future.
- With the increased threat of invasive mussels coming into BC through the Canada/US border, the IMDP welcomes DFO's support as an IMDP program funder or inspecting all watercraft at the international border.

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	Initials	Date
DM	LH	Sept 22, 2023
ADM	JM	Sept. 13, 2023
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