



October 31st, 2019

Honourable John Horgan
122 – 2806 Jacklin Road
Victoria, BC V9B 5A4

Dear Premier Horgan,

We the undersigned implore your government to intervene on behalf of all British Columbians in the matter of averting the extinction of Interior Fraser River (IFS) steelhead. Ocean survival, climate change and interception fisheries that use gill nets are the three major factors attributed to the steep downward trend for Thompson and Chilcotin steelhead. While two of these three factors are beyond immediate control, the non-selective gill net fishery on the lower Fraser River is something that can be regulated and must be done forthwith before IFS become extinct. The DFO simply refuses to make these necessary changes and your Ministries involved in working with DFO have been entirely ineffective and dismissed by DFO.

Your government is responsible for the conservation of steelhead and sturgeon, yet you have been supportive of the DFO status quo net fisheries that are the primary reason for the demise of IFS and other weak salmon populations. Your Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in concert with DFO continue to advocate the chum salmon fisheries using gill nets despite these very fisheries intercepting steelhead and sturgeon with lethal consequences. The 2019 escapement estimates for the Thompson and Chilcotin steelhead are less than 100 and 40 respectively, well below extreme conservation levels and the lowest on record. Mitigative measures put in place by DFO and your Ministries have not been effective as evidenced by the continual downward trend towards zero. Despite IFS being categorized as an extreme conservation concern DFO last weekend opened the chum fishery, which is not a sustainable fishery using gill nets and the primary reason why the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification was withdrawn. We need you to intervene immediately on this issue to ensure IFS do not become extinct.

We believe there are some innovative solutions that could be employed without impacting the harvest of chum salmon. Terminal and selective fishing methods were traditional methods of fishing historically used by Indigenous people on the lower Fraser River and these methods could again be used to harvest salmon with the live releasing of sturgeon and steelhead. Some First Nations have in fact expressed interest but have been thwarted by your Ministry. If your government wants to make a difference in salmon management while ensuring conservation of iconic species such as Interior Fraser River Steelhead then we need your voice to be heard immediately. The status of IFS is well known and being closely watched throughout North America including of course the people who live in and around the Fraser River. The BCWF and other like-minded fish conservation organizations are asking you to become the champion of salmon and steelhead conservation. This does not mean the elimination of the commercial fishing sector on the lower river. It means making long overdue changes in the way lower Fraser salmon are harvested while ensuring safe migration of steelhead and other weak salmon stocks in their long journey to their upriver spawning grounds. This is your opportunity to make a difference.



The BC Wildlife Federation is requesting a meeting with you to explore positive ways of making changes that will avert the loss of Interior Fraser River Steelhead – a circumstance that no one wants as their legacy. We would appreciate your office contacting the BC Wildlife Federation office to arrange for a meeting in November.

Yours in Conservation,

The BC Wildlife Federation
The British Columbia Federation of Drift Fishers
The British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers
Fraser Valley Angling Guides Association
The Steelhead Society of British Columbia