

NDP Response: BC Wildlife Federation

Watershed and Fisheries Sustainability Questions

1. There has been an inadequate federal investment in BC's fish resources, as evidenced by a large number of species recommended for SARA listing. What actions will you take to ensure the conservation of populations and habitat take priority over commercial fishing and habitat degradation?

Canada is blessed with the world's longest coastline and fisheries that sustain communities all along our coasts. Fishing is a deeply-rooted part of our culture and economy, but people who depend on the fishing industry need a government that works with them to build a strong and sustainable future. Unfortunately, decades of Liberal and Conservative mismanagement have left our fisheries in a desperate situation: fish populations are declining, and the health of our marine ecosystems are at risk, along with the coastal communities that depend on them. Whether it's on the coast or inland, the choices that past governments have made left our ecosystem and our economy struggling.

Canada's freshwater resources are also critical to the health and well-being of our ecosystems, our communities and our local economies. That's why a New Democrat government will implement a national freshwater strategy and work with the provinces and territories to protect our waterways under international agreements. We will also reverse the harmful changes brought in by the Conservatives, fully restore navigable waters protections for all of Canada's lakes and rivers, and invest in research to support freshwater protections.

2. How is the federal government going to implement strategies to ensure the abundance and diversity of salmon and other fish stocks?

When it comes to sustainability, New Democrats recognize that the wellbeing of our communities is reliant upon the health of our marine and freshwater ecosystems. That's why we will invest in habitat restoration and the rebuilding of fish stocks. We will also fully implement the recommendations of the Cohen Commission to protect our wild salmon population.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of our marine ecosystems, and keeping with scientific consensus, a New Democrat government will work with the province of British Columbia and First Nations to support the transition to land-based closed-containment systems. On the Atlantic coast, we'll ensure that resource allocations in the fishery are guided by the principles of adjacency, historic dependence and sustainability, while also respecting Indigenous rights.

3. Bill C-68 Fisheries Act Amendments received Royal Assent on June 2019. Will you support the early implementation of the ecologically significant area provisions in the act?

The fishing industry has long been the pride of Canada and our coastal communities. We owe it to all future generations of Canadians to ensure that the fishing way of life is protected, and that the fishing industry is strong for years to come. The Fisheries Act has been in drastic need of an update for years, and while we share some concerns with the changes that were introduced, we are pleased that some progress has finally been made to ensure the long-term protection of our marine and freshwater ecosystems. While Conservatives fought to water down the changes, and the Liberals fought for the status quo, we fought hard to make improvements to the bill that strengthened protection for our environment while continuing to ensure we have a balanced approach to conservation.

4. Do you support the rapid and orderly transition from open-net pen fisheries to land-based farm systems for the fin-fish aquaculture industry?

Jagmeet Singh's New Deal for people and communities commits to fully implementing the recommendations of the Cohen Commission. A New Democrat government will work with the province of British Columbia and First Nations to support the transition to land-based closed-containment systems.

5. What plans do you have for national watershed sustainability initiatives and what level of investment will you support?

Canada's watersheds are an extraordinary economic and environmental resource and we must ensure that we are taking action to protect them and ensure their long-term sustainability. Investing in our watersheds won't just help us fight the climate crisis, it will ensure we're tackling flooding, droughts, and protection of our fish and aquatic life.

Jagmeet Singh's New Deal for the environment will work to protect Canada's freshwater resources that are critical for the health and well-being of our ecosystems, our communities and our local economies. A New Democrat government will implement a national freshwater strategy. To ensure that our water, land, and air gets the protection it needs we'll also introduce an environmental Bill of Rights and fully protect 30% of our land, freshwater, and oceans by 2030 and back those protections with funding and enforcement.