

B.C. Wildlife Federation
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Minister Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
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Minister Bruce Ralston, K.C.
Minister of Forests
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Honourable MP Taylor Bachrach
MP Skeena—Bulkley Valley, British Columbia
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July 28th, 2023

Dear Ministers Cullen, Ralston, and MP Bachrach,

The B.C. Wildlife Federation (BCWF) is extremely concerned about the current data regarding Skeena steelhead at the Tye test fishery. While it is too early to be certain, the trend suggests this could put Skeena steelhead well into the extreme conservation concern zone and be the worst year on record. While the data indicates a potential record low, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has opened a number of non-selective fisheries for other species which could have a significant negative impact on returning steelhead. DFO has a long track record of ignoring and editing steelhead science and conservation on the Fraser River and ignoring the effects of bycatch on species 'managed' by the province.

Non-selective fisheries and Skeena steelhead management generally has been controversial for decades: we need to put conservation first and have certainty for the fishing community. In 2021, Skeena steelhead had an extremely low return, and the province did not have a means to adequately or properly make in-season decisions based on steelhead returns. It appears a similar situation is unfolding this year.

The current approach is inadequate to manage and conserve steelhead. The BCWF would like to see the Ministry of Forests develop a steelhead management plan which would include management triggers for other fisheries, as well as steelhead fisheries from closed to retention. This is overdue and should be a priority for the province of British Columbia.

In Conservation,



David Lewis
President
B.C. Wildlife Federation



Jesse Zeman
Executive Director
B.C. Wildlife Federation