# Backgrounder

EMBARGOED TO 2:00pm, April 16/19

**Action to protect Fraser River Chinook salmon**

Over the past 50 years, the world’s wildlife populations have declined by 60%. In Canada, 521 species have been identified as being at risk under the Species at Risk Act and the list is growing. Recent assessments by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) for Chinook salmon from the Fraser River system have found Chinook are also in danger of disappearing from Canada.

They have been in decline for many years as a result of a number of factors including habitat destruction, harvest, and the effects of climate change. Of the thirteen wild Fraser River Chinook salmon populations assessed by COSEWIC, only one is not at risk.

The Government of Canada has taken bold action to protect Chinook salmon, and other species at risk. These new measures announced today are only one step in a broader effort to protect and restore Chinook populations. Other actions include:

* **Habitat protection** - bringing in a *Fisheries Act*, that if passed would restore protections for fish habitat, and working closely with the BC government on land and water use policies that can impact critical habitat.
* **Habitat restoration** - In partnership with the Government of BC, DFO has created a BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, contributing more than $142 million over five years, enabling salmon and habitat restoration projects in communities across the province.
* **Fisheries management** – Last year, DFO introduced additional Chinook fishery restrictions across BC to limit pressure on these stocks; these reductions were not enough.
* **Enforcement** - we are building on our existing conservation work by investing more than $50 million to enhance our national fisheries enforcement program.
* **Climate adaptation** - DFO is researching how the rising ocean temperatures affect salmon and marine ecosystems.
* **Improved stock assessment** –the Fall Economic Statement the Government of Canada also committed an additional $107 million to support the implementation of the Fish Stocks provisions of the renewed *Fisheries Act.* To contribute to better managed fisheries, these resources will increase scientific capacity for stock assessment of Canada’s fish stocks, including Pacific salmon stock assessments
* **Enhanced science** - DFO recently co-sponsored the International Year of the Salmon research expedition to the North Pacific, where twenty-one scientists from five countries (Russia, US, Japan, South Korea and Canada) researched the behavior of wild salmon in the ocean. We have also recently hired new scientists in the Pacific region.
* **Seal and sea lions** – DFO is investing more in seal and sea lion research. The department will undertake an updated assessment of sea lions in BC. In addition, DFO will be conducting a survey of harbour seals in the Strait of Georgia and new research on the diet of pinniped populations in coastal regions. This work will support an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries and oceans management to ensure that the best science is reflected, in consideration of the role seals and other marine and aquatic species play in sustaining a healthy and productive aquatic ecosystem.
* **Working with recreational fish harvesters -** We will be looking for additional recreational fishing opportunities for stocks like coho and halibut.
* We are also extending the current Commercial Troll voluntary licence retirement program to ease pressure on fish stocks, and to support coastal fishing communities, implementing non-retention measures for the recreational fishery in some cases, and delaying the start of recreational fisheries in others until mid-to-late summer, focusing instead on recreational fishing opportunities for stocks like coho and halibut.

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