# News Release

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**Government of Canada takes action to address Fraser River Chinook decline**

April 16, 2019 Vancouver, BC Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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 for Chinook salmon from the Fraser River systemhave found Chinook are also in danger of disappearing from Canada.

Chinook salmon populations have been in decline for 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, only one is not at risk. The science is clear. The loss of these Chinook populations would be disastrous not just for wildlife that depend on them as a food source, but also for the many BC communities whose jobs and ways of life depend on Chinook salmon. That’s why the Government of Canada has taken, and is taking, urgent and concrete actions to ensure that at-risk Chinook salmon are protected for future generations.

## However, the challenges facing at risk Fraser River Chinook salmon stocks are multi-faceted. The road to recovery requires a long-term view and the collaboration of all interested parties. To this end, DFO is announcing today that it will engage with First Nations, the Province of BC and stakeholders over the next several weeks to explore establishing a process to address a broad range of issues that are impacting Chinook stocks. These issues include:

## conservation issues, including land and water use issues,

## fish habitat issues,

## the role of hatcheries to support rebuilding and the potential for marked fisheries,

## how seals and sea lions may be affecting Chinook salmon, and

## other relevant topics.

## Establishing a process to have these important discussions will play a vital role in determining how best to steward this resource going forward and what options may exist to further address the social, cultural and economic importance of these Chinook stocks.

## Fisheries management measures for 2019 will support the recovery of at risk Fraser River Chinook populations and protecting the jobs and communities that depend on Chinook survival. These measures were developed following consultation with Indigenous communities, recreational and commercial fishing organizations and environmental organizations. These measures are one component of a larger strategy intended to place at risk Pacific salmon populations on a path towards sustainability.

## Fisheries management measures for the 2019 fishing season will include:

## Commercial fishing: Commercial troll fisheries for Chinook will be closed until August 20 to avoid impacting Fraser Chinook stocks and to support conservation priorities.

## Recreational fishing: The 2019 management measures for recreational fisheries where at risk Chinook stocks may be encountered are designed to maximize returns of these at risk Chinook to their spawning grounds. Opportunities to harvest Chinook will be provided later in the season to support the long-term viability of the recreational industry. The 2019 measures include:

* + Non-retention of Chinook in Southern BC (including West Coast Vancouver Island offshore, Johnstone Strait and Northern Strait of Georgia) until July 14; a daily limit of one (1) Chinook per person per day after July 15 until December 31.

## Non-retention of Chinook in the Strait Juan de Fuca and Southern Strait of Georgia until July 31; retention of one (1) Chinook per person per day as of August 1until December 31.

* + West Coast Vancouver Island offshore areas will have non-retention of Chinook until July 14 followed by a limit of two (2) Chinook per day from July 15 to December 31. West Coast Vancouver Island inshore waters will remain at two (2) Chinook per day for the season once at-risk Chinook stocks have passed through, to support the long term viability of the salmon and of the recreational fishery.

## Fraser River recreational fisheries will remain closed to salmon fishing until at least August 23, and opportunities will be informed by any other conservation issues (coho, steelhead, etc).

## Retention of two (2) Chinook per day continues to be permitted in Northern BC and inshore areas of the West Coast of Vancouver Island. Other opportunities may be identified and announced in season where abundance permits.

## An overall reduction in the total annual limit for Chinook that can be retained per person in a season from 30 fish to 10. Recreational fisheries for other species will continue. Please see the Department’s web-site for local regulations.

## First Nations food, social and ceremonial fisheries: these fisheries, which have a constitutionally protected priority, will not commence until July 15 – concurrent with the opening of the recreational retention fishery.

## These new measures are difficult, but they are necessary to address Fraser River Chinook decline. A continued decline would irrevocably harm species that depend on the survival of Chinook salmon, such as the Southern Resident killer whale. In addition, it would permanently affect the culture, heritage and livelihoods of Indigenous communities and permanently eliminate many jobs in the recreational and commercial fishing industries.

## These measures are part of a comprehensive approach to restoring the health of wild salmon stocks. Other key elements of this comprehensive approach include:

## Habitat protection – the proposed *Fisheries Act, - if passed* would restore lost protections to our waterways and specifically to fish habitat.

## Habitat restoration – we, in collaboration with the Government of BC, recently announced the establishment of the $142M British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund. As well, the Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk, provides $55 million fund over five years to support projects that help recover aquatic species at risk; the Fraser Watershed is one area identified for priority action.

## Science – the Government of Canada is making significant investments in science to enhance fish stock assessments and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This includes an additional $107 million to support the implementation of the Fish Stocks provisions of the proposed *Fisheries Act.* These resources, committed in the Fall Economic Statement, will increase scientific capacity for stock assessment of Canada’s fish stocks, including Pacific salmon stock assessments.

## Predation – DFO, in partnership with research partners in Canada and the U.S., is convening a forum to discuss and assess scientific evidence relating to population dynamics of seals and sea lions, their diet and their impacts.

The Government of Canada is taking significant action to ensure that our Chinook salmon survive for future generations. The measures announced today highlight the government’s commitment to working collaboratively to ensure the sustainability of Chinook stocks as a means by which to ensure the health of our ecosystems and the long term prosperity of Indigenous and coastal communities.

## Quotes

“The science is clear: Pacific Chinook salmon are in a critical state. Without immediate action, this species could be lost forever. As the Minister responsible for the health and sustainability of our oceans, I want to ensure that we do not knowingly put these stocks on a path to extinction. The measures I am announcing today, as part of a comprehensive plan to protect wild Pacific salmon, are significant, necessary and difficult. They are critical to the future of Chinook stocks and to the futures of Indigenous and coastal communities who rely on them for sustenance, jobs and economic prosperity.”

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

## Quick Facts

## In November 2018, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed 16 southern BC Chinook salmon stocks, 13 of those originating in the Fraser River. Seven of the Fraser Chinook populations were assessed as endangered, four as threatened and one as a population of special concern. Only one stock was deemed not at risk. Insufficient data was available to assess the two remaining stocks.

* In 2018, a WWF Living Planet Report showed that around the world, wildlife populations have declined 60% over the past 50 years. The 2017 report by the same group indicated that half of all species in Canada were in decline. In Canada there are 521 plant and animal species at risk that are listed under SARA.

## Related products

## Backgrounder: Action to protect Fraser River Chinook salmon

## Associated Links

* [Fisheries Management Measures: Fraser River Chinook](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/species-especes/salmon-saumon/index-eng.html)
* [Pacific Salmon](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pacific-smon-pacifique/index-eng.html)
* [Living Planet Report 2018, World Wildlife Fund](http://www.wwf.ca/about_us/living_planet_2018/)
* [Living Planet Report 2017, World Wildlife Fund](http://assets.wwf.ca/downloads/WEB_WWF_REPORT_v3.pdf?_ga=2.193304557.1754278952.1555263070-511082051.1555263070)

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