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Open Letter: UBCIC Chiefs Council Calls for Protection of Pacific Wild Salmon Habitat

UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

July 12, 2022

Dear Minister Joyce Murray and Minister Josie Osborne,

IN BC THE CURRENT STATE of wild salmon and wild salmon habitat is in absolute crisis. The viability of pacific wild salmon stocks and their full life-cycle habitat in British Columbia are increasingly degraded from the confluence of climate change impacts, ineffective fisheries conservation, pollution and habitat destruction from industrial natural resource exploitation and salmon aquaculture. Wild salmon runs in British Columbia, many of which have been identified as threatened, endangered and species of special concern, rely on the health and ecological integrity of their habitat across their seasonal migrations and lifecycles.

The UBCIC Chiefs Council recently met and unanimously passed Resolution 2022-28 “Protecting Pacific Wild Salmon Habitat,” on June 2, 2022 (enclosure).¹

The UBCIC Chiefs Council demands that the federal and provincial governments prioritize and commit to the protection and enhancement of wild salmon and salmon habitat including placing a moratorium on new licenses for open-net salmon farming in the Discovery Islands, fulfilling the 2025 salmon farming phase-out commitments expressed in the Open-Net Transition Plan’s initial engagement as soon as possible, and passing biodiversity legislation that addresses wild salmon management and protection of salmon habitat. The UBCIC Chiefs Council also extends invitations to decision-makers at the federal and provincial ministries and agencies relevant to the protection of wild salmon habitat

¹ Enclosure can be viewed here: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/ubcic/pages/4589/attachments/original/1657657656/Resolution__28_Follow_Up_Open_Letter_Pacific_Wild_Salmon_Habitat_2022.pdf?1657657656.

to regularly provide updates to and take questions from Chiefs on the status of wild salmon runs in British Columbia.

The UBCIC also reiterates its longstanding call, articulated in numerous Resolutions including 2002-06, 2006-42, 2009-35, 2009-36 and 2018-07, for the federal and provincial governments to meaningfully consult with First Nations to prioritize measures that protect and enhance pacific wild salmon habitat. The requirement to consult is outlined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, passed legislation committing to implement. Articles 26(2), 29(1), 32(1) and 34 of UNDRIP must guide governments actions that impact pacific wild salmon habitat to fulfill their commitments under UNDRIP.

Since the passing of Resolution 2022-28, the Discovery Islands licenses were extended until January 2023. This extension must be a temporary measure to allow for meaningful consultation with all Title and Rights holders in BC in the process of removing all fish farms from the ocean, as committed to in Minister Murray's 2021 Mandate letter. Furthermore, we call for the immediate revision of the Conditions of License to include more substantial oversight and consequences for breaches of the regulations. Time and time again, industry has proven that self-regulation and irregular audits by government are insufficient to identify and address infringements in a timely manner. Combined with the lack of significant penalties for violating the regulations, the Conditions of License are inadequate and do not deter noncompliance, which contributes to the ongoing degradation of pacific wild salmon habitat.

We look forward to your response.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip President	Chief Don Tom Vice-President	Kukpi7 Judy Wilson Secretary-Treasurer
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CC: UBCIC
Premier John Horgan
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/ol_ubcic_chiefs_council_calls_for_protection_of_pacific_wild_salmon_habitat