



SPORT FISHING INSTITUTE
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Southern BC Chinook Fishery
May 2020

Background

Stock Status

- Some interior Fraser River stream type chinook stocks of concern face serious conservation concerns.
- Recovery will require a combination of enhancement, habitat restoration, predator control and water management measures. Reductions in fishing impacts, similar to those implemented in 2019, will achieve no measurable benefit to escapement.
- DFO biologists have confirmed that some of these stocks will continue to decline even in the complete absence of all fishing pressure, including FSC fisheries.
- However, both interior and Lower Fraser ocean type chinook are at either an abundant level of returns (Interior Fraser 4.1) or are returning at 80% of maximum sustainable yield (Lower Fraser – Harrison).
- Over 400,000 Chinook returned to the Fraser system in 2019. The majority of these are ocean type chinook.
- The Big Bar Slide presented significant and additional challenges for upstream migration for a portion of the stocks of concern in 2019. Significant work was undertaken to repair the slide in winter 2020, and it is likely that this work will greatly improve migration passage for chinook in spring\summer 2020.

Socioeconomic Impacts

- The Public Fishery in BC generates \$1.1 billion in direct revenue, creates over 9,000 jobs, and represents 43% of the GDP and 60% of employment for all fisheries including aquaculture.
- In 2019, DFO implemented management measures intended to reduce fishing impacts on Fraser Stream Type Chinook. These measures included broad scale implementation of non-retention of all Chinook for most of the BC South Coast.
- These measures resulted in a reduction of up to 80% of fishing activity causing significant social and economic damage to many small coastal communities in BC. The measures failed to achieve the stated need to achieve balance between conservation objectives and socioeconomic objectives as outlined in the Minister's 2019 Mandate Letter: *"As Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, you will lead the Government's work to protect and promote our three oceans and our waterways, sustain and rebuild the fisheries, and ensure that they remain healthy for future generations, while providing important economic opportunities to Canadians and coastal communities."*
- Covid19 will further damage the economies of small coastal communities and especially businesses that are heavily dependent on tourism. The effects of Covid19 have been devastating to tourism operators and will likely last longer than other business sectors due to travel restrictions. **There has never been a more important time to ensure that a balance between urgent social and economic concerns and more long-term conservation objectives is achieved.**

2020 SFAB Proposals – Achieving Balance

- The Sport Fishing Advisory Board of British Columbia developed a series of proposals for the 2020\2021 integrated fisheries management plan that provide the opportunity to achieve the critical balance required between socioeconomic and conservation objectives.
- **Using CWT and DNA data sets dating back to 1980, the SFAB, in close collaboration with DFO stock assessment and science branches, has identified times and locations where limited chinook retention opportunities can be provided that ensure virtually no impact on the stocks of concern.**
- Proposals were developed using these guiding principles:
 - The 2020/21 management regime will reflect a highly precautionary approach towards Fraser stream-type Chinook.
 - First Nations priority for FSC opportunities will be respected.
 - DFO has a responsibility to represent the interests of all Canadians in the management of fisheries.
 - The Department’s goal is to protect Canada’s three oceans, its coasts, waterways, and fisheries, and to ensure these remain healthy for future generations. **To this end DFO has identified achieving sustainable social and economic benefits as one of its priorities for evaluating fishery proposals in 2020.**
 - The 2019 non-retention management regime was harmful to small rural communities along the BC south coast and continued application of non-retention in the broad manner it was applied in 2019 will cause irreparable damage to these rural economies as well as to the cultural, food security and other social benefits associated with the public fishery.
- Areas proposed (see map) are both temporally and geographically separated from the migration path of Fraser River chinook stocks of concern.
- **DFO’s science and stock assessment division’s evaluation of these proposals indicates that they will result in no additional impact to stocks of concern relative to 2019 measures.**
- The management measures proposed in these areas use a combination of mark selective fisheries, size restrictions and terminal area closures to protect local returning Chinook stocks.

Recommendation

Recovery of Fraser River stocks of concern will take decades and cannot be achieved by further reductions in fishing impacts. Restarting the economy of small coastal communities is a critical and urgent need for 2020. Therefore, in order to achieve the necessary balance between conservation and socioeconomic objectives for the 2020 Southern BC Chinook Fishery, we urge DFO to implement the **“SFAB 2020\2021 Chinook Retention Proposals During Fraser River Stream-Type Chinook Conservation Measures”** submitted to the DFO Salmon Team April 9th, 2020.

Area Proposal Summary:

Proposed areas for data supported fishery Chinook retention April through various dates in July 2020 and April to May 31st, 2021 for the inside waters of southern BC, including Juan de Fuca Strait, are shaded in forest green. Existing Chinook retention areas in the nearshore WCVI are shaded bright green. These areas were provided retention opportunities of 2 per day in 2019 based on absence of stocks of concern. It is the intent and understanding of this proposal that these areas do not change in 2020. Red zones are Rockfish Conservation Areas which are closed to hook and line fishing. It is the intent of this proposal that all existing boundaries regarding RCA's remain intact. There are also existing management measures in place in terminal areas intended to protect returning local stocks. It is the intent of this proposal that these also remain unchanged.

The proposals for the inside waters and Juan de Fuca avoid the main timing on the migration route for Fraser stream-type Chinook as determined from CWT and DNA incidence in fisheries since 1980 (CWT) and since 2014 (DNA).

