



shishálh
NATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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shishalh Nation Opposes Opening of Recreational Sports Fishery and Condemns Canada's Continued Violation of Indigenous Fishing Rights

shishalh Nation, BC – On Friday, May 14th, 2021, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced the immediate opening of a recreational sports fishery allowing the harvest of Chinook Salmon in Sechelt, Salmon and Narrows Inlets, Agamemnon Channel and Jervis Inlet in our swiya (territory). This opening was announced despite DFO having been informed of significant concerns by the shishalh Nation with such an opening, and meetings being scheduled to seek to address the concerns in upcoming weeks.

“The federal government has mismanaged, infringed and ignored Indigenous fishing rights for generations. The colonial legacy is alive and well here in British Columbia, where the federal government continues to act with contempt for Indigenous rights, ignoring the well-being of vital salmon fisheries, and denying basic data and evidence at their disposal” said hiwus (Chief) Warren Paull. “For Canada to schedule meetings with us to “consult” on our concerns about the recreational fishery, but then proceed to open the fishery before those meetings take place is a slap in the face. It is also unlawful.”

This recreational fishery occurs in a context where pacific salmon continue to face challenges. Unfavorable environmental conditions, poor marine survival, habitat degradation/loss and overall low stock status have resulted in drastic and unprecedented declines in all salmon species. This is particularly true of Chinook. Currently 22 of 29 categories of Chinook are identified as stocks of concerns and an additional 5 are considered data deficient. Despite this clearly evidenced risk to Chinook, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans decided to open a recreational fishery.

“The evidence is clear. DFO has admitted that Chinook closures in 2020 did not achieve the hoped for decline in mortality. In other words, more needs to be done, and science does not support an opening. Yet, DFO has proceeded. The end result will be another significant impact on all Indigenous peoples and our rights, and indeed further damage to salmon resources that are central to the heritage and well-being of all British Columbians.” said hiwus Paull.

Given all the evidence, our position is clear this decision needs to be reversed immediately.

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