



April 17, 2023

Darren Haskell

President, Fraser Salmon Management Council

Via email to: executivedirector@frasersalmon.ca

Dear Darren:

Thank you for your correspondence of March 1, 2023, concerning Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFOs) New or Modified Chinook Mark-Selective Fishery (MSF) Pilots proposed for Spring (April/May) 2023. Additional information on the concerns you raise in your letter is provided below and the Department remains committed to further discussion with the FSMB and the Joint Technical Committee.

Discussions occurred at the Fraser Salmon Management Board (FSMB) meeting on March 15, 2023 about the status of these pilots and the process for their review. As shared at that meeting, the Department is committed to ensuring that the FSMC, and the JTC, are engaged in the work to review MSF pilots to understand the impacts on Fraser stocks. The Department also has direction for developing and providing options to the Minister for potential MSF pilots for the 2023 season; decisions will be informed by the full range of feedback provided from workshops, meetings, and correspondence. We are also willing to continue to work in partnership to identify how further MSF work can fit within the workplan of the FSMB and its JTC.

Outside of our joint process, the Department also consulted on the proposed MSF fisheries at the salmon IFMP development meetings with First Nations and stakeholders as well as at two Webinars for First Nations or their representatives.

Your letter raised a number of concerns and further information is provided on those concerns below:

- 1. mortality impacts on Fraser stream-type chinook including any variance from the FSMB target of 5% for Spring 4₂ and 5₂ and any further impacts to Summer- 5₂, and identify any further impacts on FSC priority;**

In line with the Fraser Salmon Management Board's (FSMB) 2022-23 Annual Workplan, and the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement, the Department is committed to working through the FSMB and JTC to undertake a technical review of recent year Fisheries Mortality Index (FMI) information and develop recommendations for exploitation rate targets and management actions while affording priority for FSC fisheries. Any previously conducted MSF fisheries have been included in the FMI

assessment for Fraser River Chinook and any new MSF pilot fisheries considered for 2023 would also be included in future assessments.

In considering whether to approve any new MSF, DFO proposed a number of criteria including (i) very low conservation risk for wild Chinook stocks of concern and Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW); (ii) access to abundant marked hatchery fish; (iii) monitoring and sampling in place to provide appropriate data; and, (iv) First Nations and stakeholder concerns considered in decision making. DFO remains committed to conservation of stocks of concern and providing for First Nations FSC priority after conservation.

2. review of DFO monitoring and assessment plans for proposed 2023 pilot MSF fisheries

At a recent technical workshop on March 28 (where JTC members were invited to participate), DFO shared plans for enhanced monitoring and assessment to support improved information for MSF fisheries.

Enhanced MSF monitoring plans include the following components: Expanded creel and overflight coverage, independent verification of at-sea releases through a Reference fishery (where a Reference fishery refers to contracted vessels participating in the recreational fishery with independent at-sea observers on-board), supplemental biological sampling, and a post-season technical review.

In addition to the MSF monitoring and assessment plans, there are some other important advancements related to MSF that are underway. A new analytical approach has been adopted by the Pacific Salmon Commission Chinook Technical Committee that addresses the effect of MSF's on the Coded-Wire-Tag (CWT) Chinook indicator program called the "Recommended Transition Plan for Estimating Calendar Year Exploitation Rates for Chinook Salmon Escapement Indicator Stocks Impacted by Mark-Selective Fisheries" (available here: [Technical Report Series - Pacific Salmon Commission \(psc.org\)](https://psc.org/technical-report-series-pacific-salmon-commission)).

Another advancement has been three new studies on recreational fishing-related incidental mortality (FRIM) that are underway by researchers with UBC supported through the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF).

3. review DFOs evaluation and proposed mitigations for 2022 MSF pilot projects

DFO is in the process of completing a report that provides all of the available information on the MSF fisheries conducted in 2021 and 2022 and will plan to discuss this with the JTC when it is available. It is anticipated that the preliminary report will be available April 18, and DFO will be hosting an initial webinar with First Nations and stakeholders on April 21 to introduce the report. A second webinar is anticipated before mid-May to allow adequate time for groups to review the report in detail and to prepare any feedback they wish to share.

4. report results to the FSMB for review

DFO remains committed to further discussion with the FSMB and JTC and will provide additional results and support opportunities for discussion as the information becomes available.

As part of the longer-term work on MM/MSF, the Department has been hosting a technical workshop process with First Nations and stakeholders to further discuss catch monitoring requirements, assessment of impacts on wild stocks, and other related issues. JTC members have been invited to participated in this sessions and JTC members will receive invites for all technical sessions going forward.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to respond to your concerns and look forward to further discussion at upcoming FSMB meetings.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Grout

Director, Salmon Management and Client Services.