

Trilateral Accord to Address the Decline of Wild Pacific Salmon

TRILATERAL ACCORD TO ADDRESS THE DECLINE OF WILD PACIFIC SALMON between the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (“DFO”), the First Nations Fisheries Society, defined under this agreement as the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (“FNFC”), and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (“WLR”) (each a “Party” and collectively the “Parties”).

The Parties all recognize that they have respective responsibilities and authorities to address the issue of declining wild Pacific salmon populations and to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in doing so.

Furthermore, the Parties commit to working together, without prejudice, to develop and implement a joint action plan to collaboratively address wild Pacific salmon populations of concern with the aim of improving salmon habitat and ecosystems and ultimately halting and reversing the decline of wild Pacific salmon in British Columbia.

The Parties recognize that a meaningful nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship includes involving First Nations in BC in effective decision-making in the conservation and recovery of wild Pacific salmon.

The Trilateral Accord to Address the Decline of wild Pacific Salmon (“Trilateral Salmon Accord”) is an inclusive process that is open to the involvement of all First Nations. FNFC is not a rights-holding organization and recognizes and respects the sovereignty and self-governance of all First Nations in BC. For the purposes of the Trilateral Salmon Accord, FNFC is acting as a convenor of dialogue between the Parties and any participating First Nations in the Trilateral Salmon Accord and seeks to enable all First Nations in BC the opportunity to participate in the Accord.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that BC and the DFO have legal obligations to consult with First Nations with respect to administrative decisions that may adversely affect their interests and nothing in this Trilateral Salmon Accord can supersede those obligations.

It is acknowledged that the Trilateral Salmon Accord does not reflect the perspectives all First Nations throughout the province. As such, BC and DFO will utilize a distinctions-based approach to our relationships with First Nations and are committed to working with each First Nation in a manner that is appropriate for the specific context, recognizing and respecting that each First Nation asserts distinct and different rights, laws, legal systems, and systems of governance.

The state of wild Pacific salmon is a matter of grave concern particularly as the impacts of climate change continue to intensify. Over the last several decades, through many reports, studies, and inquiries, the historic declines of BC’s wild Pacific salmon have been well documented.

Despite past efforts, and investments by the Parties in the protection, conservation, and restoration of wild Pacific salmon the condition of numerous wild Pacific salmon stocks has declined to a critical level. There are currently 43 populations of Chinook, coho and sockeye salmon assessed as at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. A new approach is needed to address declining populations and to avoid catastrophic, potentially irreversible impacts. Status quo is no longer an option.

Wild Pacific salmon, as defined by Canada’s Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific salmon, are iconic fish in Canada, woven into the cultural traditions of First Nations, and of tremendous importance to all British Columbians. Given their migratory nature through BC’s River systems and across the north Pacific Ocean, Pacific salmon populations are affected by natural and human pressures, including those resulting from management decisions made by international, federal, Indigenous, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments.

The Parties have come together over shared interests and priorities to address the historic decline of wild Pacific salmon populations in British Columbia. The parties agree that urgent action is needed to protect, conserve, and restore wild Pacific salmon stocks and their habitat.

Recognizing the WLRS, DFO and Nations bring different responsibilities, authorities, legal systems, policies, and values the Parties are committed to work together collaboratively on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis in a cooperative and respectful manner to make consensus decisions and recommendations and to develop and implement processes and agreements, including this Agreement, that assist in the *collaborative conservation and restoration of wild salmon in British Columbia*.

The shared vision of the Parties is as follows:

Collaboratively working toward the protection, restoration, and conservation of wild Pacific salmon and salmon ecosystems by supporting the revitalization of wild biologically diverse salmon populations and their habitat (ecosystems).

The Parties commit to take swift and decisive collective action where appropriate on shared priorities to protect and conserve wild Pacific salmon while concurrently developing and implementing comprehensive strategies for long-term, transformative collaboration that will serve as a cornerstone for establishing a lasting trilateral relationship to restore wild Pacific salmon.

Furthermore, the Parties commit to working together, without prejudice, to develop and implement a joint action plan to collaboratively address wild Pacific salmon populations of concern with the aim of improving salmon habitat and ecosystems and ultimately halting and reversing the decline of wild Pacific salmon in British Columbia.

The following areas of focus were jointly developed by participants from all parties. As a priority, the Parties agree to collaborate through the commitment of resources, time, information sharing, and action towards reversing the decline of wild salmon, on subjects that may include but are not limited to:

1. Climate Adaptation
2. Ecosystem Monitoring
3. Habitat Restoration
4. Recovery or Rebuilding Plans
5. Watershed Security

The success of this Trilateral Accord will be measured based on the state of the following shared outcomes:

- a) Development of a joint action plan and implementation of meaningful actions advanced through partnership to support healthy and productive biologically diverse wild Pacific salmon populations and habitats.
- b) Trust among the partners in the Trilateral relationship, and the participation of First Nations across BC in the collaborative process.
- c) A collaborative and coordinated approach that enables alignment of actions to support collective wild Pacific salmon protection, conservation, and restoration priorities.
- d) Advancing reconciliation with First Nations in BC through the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The shared outcomes will form the basis of associated performance indicators, which the Trilateral Steering Committee will jointly develop.

Each Party commits to working together to secure future investment in the recovery and preservation of wild Pacific salmon and in doing so Parties will seek funding opportunities to carry out the functions and activities in the Accord.

Further, to promote the Parties' success in implementing this Agreement, the Parties recognize that the implementation of this Agreement will occur in an incremental manner to reflect the evolving priorities of the Parties and the need to develop the capacity of the trilateral relationship.

Implementation of this collaborative approach will be led by a Trilateral Steering Committee comprised of participants from each of the Parties.


The Parties agree to review this agreement in 2 years' time. Any party will have the right to terminate this agreement, at its sole discretion, upon 30 days written notice to the other parties.


This document is not a contract, and it does not create any legally binding rights or obligations.


Each of the Parties warrants that it has the legal capacity to enter this Trilateral Salmon Accord.

Signed on this 21 day of June 2024

On behalf of the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC



Hugh Braker
President
First Nations Fisheries Council of BC

John Henderson
Vice-President
First Nations Fisheries Council of BC

Thomas Alexis
Secretary Treasurer
First Nations Fisheries Council of BC

On behalf of the Ministry of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard



The Honourable Diane Leboathillier,
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the
Canadian Coast Guard

On behalf of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Hon. Nathan Cullen

The Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Kelly Greene, Parliamentary Secretary for
Fisheries and Aquaculture