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Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus
c/o Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter
302-733 Johnson St.
Victoria, BC V8W 3C7

September 26, 2005

The Honourable Geoff Regan,
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. Regan:

We write this letter as a formal request that you immediately consider incorporating the direct participation of the Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus in the Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Commission and its various panels and boards.

We believe that your action in this regard would be consistent with, the forward-looking agenda the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has recently embraced, aimed at broadening the "stakeholder" values that inform decision-making about salmon fisheries and conservation, and with Canada's international agreements

Last December, at a brief speech you made in Vancouver, announcing the draft Wild Salmon Policy, you properly stated: "It's impossible to overstate the importance of Pacific salmon to Pacific Canadians." You also noted that decisions about salmon "have to be made using open and accountable public processes that reflect societal values for salmon conservation."

Three years ago, your government took steps to include the conservation sector in decision-making by formally recognizing the Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus (MCC) as the conservation sector's "stakeholder" interest in Pacific fisheries. The MCC is now consulted on some marine conservation matters. In the areas of salmon conservation, the MCC is formally engaged, coastwide, as a participant in the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee.

Recognition of the conservation sector as a stakeholder interest in fisheries and oceans decision-making has been long in coming. We feel very strongly that it is time the MCC be granted full representation in the bodies of the Pacific Salmon Commission.

Several years ago, the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity and the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development (Brundtland) committed member states to conserve the world's biological diversity not just for its immediate extractive value, but also for its ecological, aesthetic, cultural, and other inherent values. It has long been recognized that nation states must not only incorporate these values in natural-resource

planning, but must also change the way decisions are made, to engage conservation organizations, for instance, as formal “stakeholders” in the decision-making process. This approach has most recently been confirmed as essential in work undertaken by the Pew Oceans Commission, the Worldwatch Institute, the UN Development Program and the UN Environment Program.

In 2003, the Fraser River Sockeye Review (which included representatives from regional DFO, commercial, recreational, First Nations and conservation-sector groups) recommended that your office institute a new, formal advisory process including a wide spectrum of interests, including conservationists, community groups and the provincial government, to address itself to “major policy matters affecting the fishery” on Canada’s west coast. Your government accepted this recommendation, without reservation.

To date, we have seen only the establishment of the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee.

We urge you to take further and immediate steps to implement the commitments your government made with respect to incorporating a broader cross-section of interests in fisheries decision-making. We request that you draw from the MCC membership in making appointments to the Pacific Salmon Commission.

The Pacific Salmon Commission, arising from the Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Treaty and authorized by relevant legislation in both the Canada and the United States, is a key decision-making body in salmon-fisheries management.

This past season, the conservation sector stood by the department in a series of extremely difficult conservation decisions DFO had to make with regards to the management of the Fraser River salmon fishery, which is governed largely by decisions made by the Pacific Salmon Commission and its Fraser panel.

Our ability to assist DFO in its decision-making was severely hampered by the fact that, unlike government and industry (and some minor First Nations engagement), the MCC was wholly unrepresented on the Pacific Salmon Commission’s Fraser panel and its technical committee.

We raise this as a clear example of the difficulty you alluded to last December. Much of the controversy surrounding DFO’s decisions this past season were precisely because of the absence of “open and accountable public processes” at the Pacific Salmon Commission.

We look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,

The MCC Salmon Committee



Vicky Husband,
Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter



Craig Orr
Watershed Watch Salmon Society



Nicola Temple
Raincoast Conservation Society



Bill Wareham
David Suzuki Foundation

Cc: Larry Murray; Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Paul Sprout; DFO Regional Director General (Pacific)