

Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus,
Salmon Committee
1037 Madore Avenue
Coquitlam, BC V3K 3B7
Canada
Ph.604.936.9474
Fx.604.936.5150

The Hon. Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Ph.613.996.3085
Fx.613.996.6988

June 28, 2005

Dear Minister Regan,

We are writing to express our concerns about the integrity of the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee (IHPC) process, which was set up by your Department to allow for stakeholder input into fishery management planning in the Pacific Region. These concerns have implications for the decision on 2005 fishery harvest levels for the endangered Cultus Lake sockeye run.

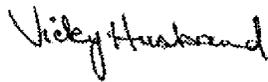
As stakeholders within the IHPC, our expectation is that the IHPC will operate with a process that is open and transparent, as outlined in the committee's terms of reference. Unfortunately, this has not been the experience of our representatives to the IHPC. At the last IHPC meeting, the Commercial Salmon Advisory Board (CSAB) put forth a proposal to increase harvest rates on Cultus Lake sockeye. This proposal was not made available in advance of the IHPC meetings to all participants, thus inhibiting an informed and open decision-making process at the meeting. Instead, the cursory presentation of this proposal to the IHPC was followed up with lobbying for its support outside the IHPC. This is blatant disregard for the IHPC process that all stakeholders agreed to and it defeats the purpose and mandate of this committee.

Allowing for the end-run option in development of fisheries management plans, as is being attempted by the CSAB, forces you to make decisions based on pressure from stakeholder groups, not guidance from the IHPC. Under this scenario, it becomes a matter of which sector has the greater capacity to lobby for their viewpoint. This in effect shifts the accountability and responsibility taken on by the IHPC back to your office and disempowers the IHPC as a functioning entity. If this is allowed to happen it seems inevitable that the IHPC process will collapse.

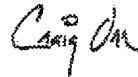
We understand that you will be making a decision soon with respect to 2005 salmon harvest plans, including the exploitation rate on Cultus Lake sockeye. Let us assure you that the CSAB proposal does not have the widespread support that has been suggested by its advocates. The MCC salmon committee supports the original 10-12% harvest ceiling that was suggested by the Department in the South Coast Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. Maintaining this ceiling would reflect the Department's commitment to maintain genetic diversity as outlined in the Wild Salmon Policy, as well as your personal commitment to protect this population. The acceptance of a higher Cultus harvest rate, given the series of events leading up to this decision, would represent a transgression of the IHPC process and does not bode well for the survival of the IHPC as an entity with any credibility into the future.

Sincerely,

The Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus Salmon Committee



Vicky Husband, CM, OBC
Conservation Chair
Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter



Dr. Craig Orr
Executive Director
Watershed Watch Salmon Society



Nicola Temple
Wild Salmon Program Coordinator
Raincoast Conservation Society



Jeffery Young
Aquatic Biologist
The David Suzuki Foundation

Cc: Mr. Larry Murray, Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Mr. Paul Sprout, Regional Director General, Pacific Region, Fisheries and Oceans
Canada
Mr. Bert Ionson, Regional Resource Management Coordinator, Salmon, Fisheries and
Oceans Canada