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[Home](#) > [Media Room](#) > [Ministerial Statements 2011](#)

Statement by Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans - Pacific Halibut

February 15, 2011

OTTAWA, ONTARIO – The Honourable Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, today issued the following statement:

Our Government understands the value and significance of the Pacific halibut fishery to British Columbians. The current sharing formula, which allocates 88% of the harvest to commercial fishermen and 12% to recreational harvesters, has been in place since 2003. Since then there have been a number of attempts by representatives of each sector to develop an acceptable way to transfer allocation between them.

The most recent round of discussions took place throughout 2010. I'm disappointed to report that those discussions have reached an impasse and stakeholders have been unable to reach a consensus. Because of this, a ministerial decision is required to move forward for the 2011 season.

As Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I have been entrusted with managing our precious marine resources responsibly and sustainably. This responsibility includes ensuring that we meet our various international obligations with regards to conservation. All fish management decisions are made to meet the following three priorities: conservation, sustainability of the fishery and economic viability. It is with these in mind that I announce the following:

The 2011 Pacific halibut recreational fishing season will open March 1st. Recreational anglers with a tidal license will be able to catch one halibut per day with two in possession.

Our Government recognizes the value of the recreational fishery to British Columbians and the economic opportunities it provides. Therefore, for the 2011 season only, we will undertake a trial to make available to interested recreational stakeholders experimental licenses that will allow them to lease quota from commercial harvesters. This will provide access to halibut beyond the limits of the standard recreational license, giving those who choose to participate greater stability for business planning purposes.

As for the future, clearly it is in the best interests of all sectors to come to a long-term solution that recognizes the important contribution each makes to British Columbia. To achieve this, I have asked my Parliamentary Secretary, Randy Kamp, Member of Parliament from Pitt Meadows-Maple Ridge-Mission, to work with my officials to develop options for my consideration prior to the start of the 2012 season. These options will need to meet the following objectives:

- **Conservation** of the resource through enhanced monitoring of the recreational fishery, thereby keeping all halibut fisheries accountable for maintaining catches within the total allowable catch.
- **Economic prosperity** through predictable access for all users.
- **Flexibility** through an effective mechanism for transfers between the sectors.

I have long held the belief that those who participate in and depend on a fishery to make their living need to be able to provide input into how that fishery is managed. Ideally, that happens in a collaborative and constructive manner. Many stakeholders from both sectors have clearly articulated their current positions, but I encourage continued dialogue about new approaches between interested parties and my officials. The sooner a permanent solution is found, the sooner British Columbians can put uncertainty behind them and look forward to a viable future for this fishery.

Fact Sheet: [Pacific Recreational Halibut Fishery](#)

Fact Sheet: [Pacific Commercial Halibut Fishery](#)

Questions & Answers: [Recreational Halibut Experimental Fishery](#)

- 30 -

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FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FEBRUARY 16, 2011**

**An Open Letter from the First Nations Summit to
Hon. Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Hon. John
Duncan Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs**

Coast Salish Territory (Vancouver) — The First Nations Summit today released the attached open letter to Hon. Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Hon. John Duncan Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs calling for an immediate meeting to discuss Canada's mismanagement of the Pacific Halibut fishery.

The First Nations Summit is astounded and dismayed by yesterday's announcement by Minister Shea dividing allocations to the commercial and sports fishing sectors. This decision, together with the rationale, completely defies Supreme Court of Canada decisions respecting First Nations/Aboriginal Fisheries.

The First Nations Summit is seeking an immediate meeting with Minister Shea and Minister Duncan to discuss this important issue in greater detail.

-30-

The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

For Further Information:
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First Nations Summit:
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FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

February 16, 2011

Hon. Gail Shea
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
MINISTER'S OFFICE, CENTENNIAL TOWER
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6

Hon. J. Duncan
Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs
EXECUTIVE OFFICES
10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4

Dear Minister Shea and Minister Duncan,

RE: PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERY

We are absolutely astounded by your February 15, 2011 Pacific halibut fishery announcement dividing allocations to the commercial and sports fishing sectors. This decision, together with the rationale, completely defies Supreme Court of Canada decisions respecting First Nations/Aboriginal Fisheries.

Supreme Court of Canada decisions, beginning with the Sparrow Case, have been unequivocally clear that following only conservation, Aboriginal Fisheries is a priority over commercial & sport fishing interests. This includes all fisheries, not just salmon or halibut. Yet, while First Nations are seeking agreements, through good faith negotiations, your Department is shamelessly dividing the spoils between the commercial and sports fishing interests.

This is a totally unacceptable approach by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as it flies in the face of good faith negotiations.

We urgently request a meeting with you to discuss this important matter in greater detail. Please have your officials contact Colin Braker (cbraker@fns.bc.ca) at our office at 604-926-9903 to confirm an early meeting.

Sincerely,
FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT TASK GROUP

Grand Chief Edward John

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Jody Wilson-Raybould, Regional Chief, BC Assembly of First Nations
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