



SALISH SEA HERRING COLLAPSE LOOMS AS DFO BOWS TO INDUSTRY, IGNORING ITS OWN SCIENCE, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PUBLIC OUTCRY

Vancouver Island Communities and conservation groups alarmed as DFO green-lights 20% herring quota despite management plan outlining HIGH risk of stock collapse.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Salish Sea, January 30th 2020 - Ignoring [calls for a moratorium](#) by over one hundred thousand Canadians¹, 53 Vancouver Island municipalities, First Nations groups², local government federations³ as well as its own scientists⁴, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has just implemented a Management Plan which may ensure a further collapse of B.C. herring.

Herring in the Strait of Georgia has dwindled⁵ by 60% in the last four years. The last of five commercial herring fisheries regions on the West Coast of B.C. is on course to succumb to overfishing and mismanagement, owing to a 20% quota set by DFO and approved on January 29th, in a move seen widely by conservationists as a successful push by the industrial fishing lobby, which contradicts precautionary recommendations ("high potential to over-harvest...which may pose a risk to the stocks"), by DFO's own scientists⁶.

DFO's optimistic outlook ("Stock biomass is high and growth is positive"⁷) and inflated prediction for 2019⁸ have led to higher percentage catches than the 20% quota, as stock assessments are adjusted after the fishery, when the percentage allowable has already been caught.

Despite downward population trends and the admission by DFO scientists that a "reduction in harvest rate" is "the most effective means of mitigating stock assessment errors by reducing the absolute size of the catch"⁹, the Fisheries Ministry has again allowed the 20% quota to remain in effect for 2020, a quota that remains unchanged since 1983.

"A hundred and fifteen thousand people have signed our petition to close the fishery, twenty five hundred people have signed the Parliamentary petition to close the fishery, hundreds of people have sent letters to the Minister, and representatives of the 13 Islands Trust unanimously passed a resolution to close the herring fishery. Is the Minister listening?", stated Grant Scott of Conservancy Hornby Island, who along with local B.C. conservation groups Pacific Wild, the Association for Denman Island Marine Stewards and Sea Shepherd Canada are calling for a moratorium on the herring fishery in the Strait of Georgia.

DFO has stated it "supports local and Indigenous Knowledge"¹⁰ (and has included comments from First Nations in its most recent management plan¹¹), yet First Nations members from around the Strait of Georgia are demanding a moratorium including The W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council, representing Tsartlip, Tsawout and Tseycum First Nations, who delivered a [letter](#) to the current DFO Minister, Bernadette

Jordan, which stated “The continued operation of commercial herring fisheries is in direct violation of the W̱SÁNEĆ Douglas Treaty right to carry on our fisheries as formerly”.

MP for Courtenay-Alberni Gord Johns, who has amassed over 2500 signatures in a House of Commons E-petition calling for a moratorium on the SOG herring fishery stated, “I fully support the call by fifty three Vancouver Island municipalities and the Islands Trust in their resolutions for a suspension of the Salish Sea herring fishery in keeping with the importance of applying a precautionary approach until the stocks have had a chance to rebuild. Further, I urge the government to provide meaningful financial compensation to local fishers affected.”

Ian McAllister of Pacific Wild is quoted as saying, “It's incomprehensible to me that Fisheries and Oceans Canada is planning to continue managing herring stocks the same way they've managed many of the other stocks on the B.C. coast that have resulted in collapse and total shutdown of commercial fisheries. The Minister seems to be listening to the herring fishing industry and going against her own scientists by recommending 20% to be killed this year when her scientists are saying to be precautionary it should be 10%”. Who is the Minister listening to?

Collapsing herring stocks, falling demand and lower prices for herring roe on the international markets, the understanding that herring plays such a vital role for an array species of marine life and sea birds that rely on herring as a main food source, such as chinook salmon and Southern resident orcas, are all factors that have raised the profile of the Strait of Georgia herring fishery, calling into question the wisdom behind the decision to allow the contentious fishery to proceed. Locky Maclean, a resident of Hornby Island where the last herring spawn in the Salish Sea occurs each March, stated “the only sensible thing for Minister Bernadette Jordan to do right now is put a moratorium in place immediately. The future of the Salish Sea is at stake, an entire ecosystem hangs in the balance, and the industrial fishing lobby should not be calling the shots.”

¹ <https://www.change.org/p/protect-pacific-herring-from-dfo-s-unsustainable-kill-fishery>

² <https://wsanec.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2019Dec18-WLC-Letter-to-Minister-Jordan-Herring-1.pdf>

³ http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/media/348429/tc_2019-10-25_wilkinson_herring_ltr_final.pdf

⁴ (DFO's 2019/20 IFMP p. 206). <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0bxd58d6tvbmisg/AABjkYaLIFC1yW9Qkt7h2vICa?dl=0>

⁵ DFO, volume of herring in the SOG has fallen from 129,000 tons in 2016 to 85,700 tons in 2019 to a predicted 54,000 tons this year

⁶ (DFO's 2019/20 IFMP p. 206). <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0bxd58d6tvbmisg/AABjkYaLIFC1yW9Qkt7h2vICa?dl=0>

⁷ (Final 2018-19 Pacific Herring IFMP, p. 64)

⁸ (DFO, 135,497 tons of herring speculated when only 62,994 tons returned)

⁹ (*DFO Stock Status Update with Application of Management Procedures for Pacific Herring (Clupea Pallasii) in British Columbia: status in 2019 and forecast for 2020*, p. 11, Oct 28, 2019)". "reduction in harvest rate from 20% to 10%...the most effective means of mitigating stock assessment errors by reducing the absolute size of the catch".

¹⁰ April 4, 2019, in the House of Commons, Fisheries Minister Wilkinson stated DFO "supports local and Indigenous Knowledge." also see 2019/20 IFMP on consultation etc.

¹¹ 2019/2020 IFMP, p. 31.

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Please see our report attached: **The State of Strait of Georgia Herring and Why There Should Be No Herring Fishery in 2020**

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Images of Pacific herring and the commercial roe fishery are available at <https://bit.ly/2lZywdB>.