

Government mismanagement to blame for substantial Pacific herring decline

New paper "*The Fighting Fish*" provides evidence

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Archives demonstrate long-term knowledge of impending collapse and distinctive herring populations. Still, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has approved the 2020/2021 Pacific herring Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. They are choosing to move forward with opening the Strait of Georgia roe herring seine and gillnet fisheries with a 20% harvest rate of 18,001 tons. Despite garnering widespread criticism and low biomass assessments, DFO continues to ignore ecology-based management recommendations.

Pacific Wild recommends an immediate moratorium be placed on the commercial herring fishery until such time that populations can rebound and the science behind their life history is more fully understood.

Drawing attention to both recent Pacific herring assessments as well as historical evidence, a newly published Pacific Wild research paper, "[*The Fighting Fish*](#)" concluded that the current Pacific herring fishery is unsustainable and requires time to rebuild. The evidence outlined in this paper is irrefutable; the species is collapsing, as told through Traditional Ecological Knowledge, data collected by researchers, and the interactions between species in the food web.

"The archives and fisheries management's own historical records prove that non-migratory herring do exist as specialized local populations with minimal mixing among other localized populations," said Bryce Casavant, the paper's author. "Herring require specialized management considerations and that is not taking place currently. The future management of fisheries must be overhauled to utilize a holistic analysis of the entire ecosystem vs the species by species approach. The valuation of a species cannot be calculated solely for its commercial economic exploitation."

"Pacific Wild has provided compelling evidence of the need for a moratorium or cancellation of the commercial herring fishery in the Salish Sea until a whole-ecosystem plan can be created," said NDP fisheries critic, Gord Johns. "It is beyond time for the federal government to listen to the local knowledge of coastal residents and First Nations leaders and Elders," he said.

About Pacific Herring

Pacific herring are an integral part of the Pacific northwest ecosystem. As a major prey species for Chinook salmon, Coho salmon, lingcod, sea lions, harbour seals, seabirds, dogfish, and a host of other marine predators, herring are a key component of the food chain for their entire lives. Pacific Herring are the foundation of the food supply for the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale. Only one herring out of every 10,000 eggs will ever return to spawn. As a result of human exploitation and overfishing, only one of the five historically active Pacific herring fishing grounds remains active today, further demonstrating a long-term decline and systemic mismanagement.

"This report leaves no (little) room for opinion or inference," Pacific Wild Marine Campaigner Emmie Page noted. "These historical fishing papers are evidence that we have known about a herring decline and shift in catch sizes since 1967 and suspected that there are migratory and non-migratory populations since the late 1980s. It is confusing as to why we are still managing this fishery the same way decades later."

About Pacific Wild

Pacific Wild is a wilderness and wildlife protection non-profit organization in British Columbia. The purpose of the Herring Campaign is to increase awareness on the importance herring play in British Columbia's coastal ecosystems. Pacific Wild advocates for increased research and proper management for the unsustainable herring fishery in the Strait of Georgia.

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Additional Links:

- Click [here](#) for *The Fighting Fish* paper PDF file
- Click [here](#) for *The Fighting Fish* web article
- Click [here](#) for downloadable footage of the herring fishery (credit Pacific Wild)