



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

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Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*
2013-501-00178

SEP 13 2013

Keith Douglas
< douguide@live.com >

Dear Mr. Douglas:

Thank you for your recent correspondence, regarding your concerns about commercial fisheries in Dean Channel.

For salmon management, DFO is guided by *Canada's Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon* (Wild Salmon Policy) for the protection, preservation and rebuilding of wild salmon and their marine and freshwater ecosystems for the benefit of all Canadians.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) carefully designs fisheries plans to avoid or minimize impacts on weaker stocks while providing benefits to Canadians through the sustainable harvest of more abundant salmon stocks. Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs) for salmon are prepared each year to identify fishing opportunities and constraints for the coming season, and they are developed based on DFO scientific analysis of environmental conditions and stock assessment. The Department adopts a cautious approach to harvesting opportunities to ensure that conservation objectives are met. The Salmon Northern B.C. IFMP contains information on conservation objectives and decision rules for managing fisheries under variable abundance levels, and provides clarity on how the *Allocation Policy for Pacific Salmon* is applied. The Salmon Northern B.C. IFMP is available at < <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/mplans/2013/smon/smon-nc-cn-2013-eng.pdf> >.

The Department's precautionary management approach of limiting commercial, recreational and First Nation salmon harvests is designed to not only conserve salmon stocks in British Columbia, but also to support the process of rebuilding them. Fisheries are managed to provide sufficient numbers of salmon to spawn in our rivers and to sustain them for the future.

For steelhead, the Department works with the Province of British Columbia to manage steelhead under a Memorandum of Understanding; the current approach for managing fisheries that impact steelhead was developed jointly by DFO and the Province. The

Department's management approach is to minimize the impact on steelhead during Canadian fisheries directed at more abundant salmon populations.

The chum gillnet fishery was targeting strong returns of Bella Coola chum in Area 8 and averaged two days of fishing per week for the months of July and August. This activity level is below to the historic average fishing pattern. The Dean Channel gillnet fishery effort was less than 10 percent of the historical average. The Area 8 seine fishing effort was also less than 10 percent of the historical average. The fishery opportunities provide significant economic opportunities to the Bella Coola, Hagensborg and Shearwater communities, as well as to the Heiltsuk and Nuxalk First Nations, while meeting conservation objectives.

As you know, no conservation problems for steelhead have been identified; however significant management measures are in place to reduce harm to steelhead in these fisheries. In addition to the mandatory release of all steelhead bycatch in Area 8, management measures require the chum gillnet fishery to only take place in daylight and that all vessels have a revival box to improve the release survival of any steelhead encountered. Further, until August 15, all gillnets in Dean Channel and the north half of Fisher Channel were required to be equipped with a minimum 100 centimetre deep weed line to minimize steelhead encounters. (This refers to the practice of suspending the net 100 centimetres below the surface of the water to avoid catching surface swimming species such as steelhead; this practice is consistent with studies that show that steelhead travel near the surface.) This requirement was extended past August 15th due to the low return of Dean River steelhead. In Dean Channel for the month of July and August there were only 19 vessel days in total and many of these were only partial days.

As of August 20, 2013, the total number of steelhead caught in both the gillnet fishery and the seine fishery was 328, all of which were released. These steelhead encounters represent less than 0.1 % of the overall catch in the gill net (290 fish) and seine (38 fish) fisheries. Most of the fishing effort was at the south end of Dean Channel (over 20 miles away from the Dean River) where the steelhead origin was likely the Bella Coola River.

Should you have further questions regarding steelhead bycatch in Area 8, you may wish to contact Mr. Steven Groves, Resource Management Section Head for Salmon, North Coast Area, by telephone at 250-627-3455 or by email at steven.groves@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

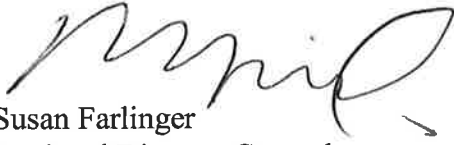
Also, the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) has been advising DFO on recreational fishery issues for nearly 50 years. Topics include enhancement, fishing plans, regulations and any areas of concern to the recreational fishing community. The SFAB represents recreational fishing interests on the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee, which advises the Minister on fishing plans.

Local stakeholders are encouraged to provide their input to local Sport Fishing Advisory Committees (SFACs), which are located throughout the province. We will be holding meetings with the SFACs over the next few months to review our current fishing plans

and to make improvements for next year. We encourage your input and participation to this process. To become involved in this process, please contact the local SFAC in your area. For more information, visit < <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/consultation/smon/sfab-ccps/index-eng.html> >.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Farlinger', written in a cursive style.

Susan Farlinger
Regional Director General
Pacific Region