

B.C. FEDERATION OF DRIFT FISHERS

Re: North Coast Post Season Review

Minister of Fisheries & Oceans
Hon. Joyce Murray, Minister
min@dfo-mpo.gc.a

Dear Minister:

We are writing to express our grave concerns that a reported 1923 wild Skeena steelhead were reported retained in First Nations fisheries in the non tidal portion of the Skeena river, despite the lowest reported returns in history. With 5300 steelhead estimated to return this retention represents 36% of the estimated return, which will be further significantly reduced by other factors such as predation & poaching. We must question the sincerity of your Ministry regarding past commitments toward protecting steelhead stocks of concern and working collaboratively with the province and the recreational fishery. Why are continuing to allow fisheries that are non selective and targeting stocks at point of extreme conservation concern?

From recent SFAB meetings we had some sense of optimism that DFO was serious about protecting steelhead and working with the province and sectors with joint efforts to protect and enhance steelhead stocks in B.C. As evidenced with interior Fraser steelhead and now Skeena stocks, these fish are at point of extreme conservation concern. Allowing this devastating impact on Skeena stocks makes a mockery of potential recovery efforts. Allowing this impact is a direct slap in the face to the many representatives of the recreational fishery who have worked tirelessly toward protecting steelhead and supported required actions including closing of any rec fishing opportunities.

Permitting a fishery on an established stock of concern suggests that your Ministry puts sector allocation on a species at risk above conservation concerns. If that is policy, it puts at risk our sincere efforts to work collaboratively with F/N's and others in a very difficult position.

Your comments in response to this very serious situation are greatly appreciated as we know our concerns are shared by many organizations and anglers at large province wide.

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cc: SFAB, North & South Coast Chapters
B.C. Federation of Fly Fishers
B.C. Wildlife Federation
Outdoor Recreation Council
Jennifer Davis, Provincial Director, Fish & Aquatic Branch