**BC Federation of Drift Fishers**
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July 25, 2023

 **A STATEMENT TO DFO RE: CHILLIWACK RIVER CLOSURE**

The B.C. Federation of Drift Fishers has concerns regarding the lack of consultation and perceived full disclosure of information to justify the closure adjacent to the Vedder River bridge. The lack of adequate consultation is particularly disappointing considering the effort the recreational sector has made in the past years to support transparent discussions with both DFO & local First Nations. We initiated the small group meetings to supplement the SFAC process and we were instrumental in establishing the Lower Fraser Collaborative Table (LFCT). We have been impressed with the candor demonstrated at past small group meetings and all agreed it supported the SFAC process.

To have a closure implemented without due process is very disturbing and contrary to what we perceived as effective past communication. We must question the rational that closure was required due to rec fishers impacting threatened Cultus Lake Sockeye? Our observers have been on the river the past days and have observed zero indication of so-called bottom bouncing impacting Sockeye.

Considering the punitive DFO actions resulted following the Sumas Nation sonar counting ceremony July 18th we must question if concerns were expressed at that meeting which resulted in these actions. If there are legitimate concerns about rec fishers impeding these counts these concerns should be expressed thru a meeting involving all parties. We are on record supporting the Sumas activities & have supported sharing the river fisheries with them and other F/N's as required. The past 3 years have demonstrated cooperation and lack of conflict between the sectors.

We and others within our community and on this e mail chain have supported enforcement where required and we can provide leadership in educating anglers in selective fisheries. This support is contingent on joint consultation and documentation of actions justifying closures. That is how the SFAB process and other true consultation must work to ensure continued support of our sector.

Rather ironic that our decades of trying to pursue regulations such as leader lengths to no avail, could have benefited this current situation. We remain committed to all required collaborative actions required to ensure safe respectful and selective fisheries for all. Arbitrary decisions outside of official process are not part of the required solutions to issues impacting the resource.

***Rod Clapton***
President, BC Federation of Drift Fishers