

Response Statement - Chinook Salmon, Southern Mainland Boundary Bay, Ocean, Fall population

January 10, 2022

Common Name: Chinook Salmon, Southern Mainland Boundary Bay, Ocean, Fall population

Scientific Name: *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Threatened

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: On 2021-10-12, the Minister of the Environment received the COSEWIC assessment of the Chinook Salmon, Southern Mainland Boundary Bay, Ocean, Fall population as Threatened. Within 36 months of this date, the Minister will seek to obtain a Governor in Council decision on whether or not to amend the List for this species, or whether to refer the matter back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration. A summary of the consultations and an analysis of why the order is appropriate will be provided. During the extended consultation period, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations with the government of British Columbia, Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Chinook Salmon, Southern Mainland Boundary Bay, Ocean, Fall population should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Threatened, or whether the matter should be referred back to COSEWIC. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of the Environment will also consult with the Nisga'a Joint Fisheries Management Committee (NJFMC), the Maa-Nulth Joint Fisheries Committee, the Tsawwassen Joint Fisheries Committee and the Tla'amin Joint Fisheries Committee.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: Mature fish in this population spawn in tributaries to Boundary Bay such as the Serpentine, Nicomekl and Little Campbell rivers, in southern British Columbia. This wildlife species occurs in highly altered freshwater and marine habitats. Ongoing low marine survival, bycatch, and fish culture effects are cumulative threats to the remaining wild fish. Hatchery releases are ongoing and have included fish from other populations, threatening the genetic integrity of the few remaining wild fish. While hatchery production has allowed the total population size to increase, a consensus of expert opinion estimates fewer than 1000 mature wild fish remain.

Occurrence: British Columbia, Pacific Ocean

Competent Minister(s):
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:
British Columbia

Other applicable legislation: *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: The Government of Canada is implementing a broad range of conservation activities to support the recovery of southern British Columbia (BC) Chinook populations. The Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) was launched under Budget 2021 and commits up to \$647 million as part of the largest-ever Government investment towards Pacific Salmon recovery. The PSSI will be implemented in partnership with Indigenous groups, local organizations, provincial and territorial authorities and implicated communities. It is expected to address declines in priority Pacific salmon populations, including southern BC Chinook, through measures like investments in habitat restoration, ecosystem-based planning, and conservation based enhancement. Current measures made by the Government of Canada to conserve Chinook Salmon include significant investments and partnerships in habitat restoration and conservation through the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, the Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk, the Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk and the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk program. The Government of Canada has also implemented urgent management measures to protect at risk populations of southern BC Chinook from further declines, including restrictions to commercial, recreational, and First Nations fisheries to maximize returns of Fraser River Chinook to the spawning grounds and targeted fishing closures to protect West Coast Vancouver Island stocks in several commercial fisheries. More recently, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has taken steps under the PSSI to implement closures to commercial salmon fisheries in areas with stocks of conservation concern. DFO's Salmonid Enhancement Program also plays a key role in the Department's work to conserve and manage Pacific salmon stocks. The program's activities aim to rebuild vulnerable salmon stocks and improve fish habitat to sustain salmon populations. Since 2005, the Department has used the Wild Salmon Policy as part of a suite of Departmental policies that provide direction and guidance to DFO programs to support wild Pacific salmon conservation and sustainable use. The Wild Salmon Policy 2018 to 2022 Implementation Plan outlines key Departmental Pacific salmon-related activities, their timelines, and accountabilities. Federal legislation, such as the *Fisheries Act* and the *Impact Assessment Act*,

consider fish and fish habitat and complement each other in terms of providing habitat protection. The review of projects that may impact Chinook habitat are subject to the federal regulatory mechanisms under these Acts. The Pacific Salmon Treaty, signed by Canada and the United States in 1985, is an international agreement that provides the framework through which the two countries work together to conserve and manage Pacific salmon. In 2019, a new ten year conservation and harvest sharing agreement was implemented, ensuring a continued bilateral approach to Pacific Chinook Salmon management.