

May 30, 2018 - DFO has announced Chinook measures coast wide and restrictions due to Southern Resident Killer Whale conservation and recovery concerns. While opportunities persist along the entire coast a number of the measures imposed are unnecessarily harsh and go well beyond conservation needs and instead satisfy political pressures. A disappointing outcome for those that have spent a tremendous amount of time to work on plans to properly address conservation concerns for Chinook and to aid in the recovery of SRKW only to have those processes and efforts largely ignored.

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May 30, 2018

CHINOOK MEASURES ANNOUNCED

Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced conservation measures for Northern and Southern BC Chinook Salmon and Southern Resident Killer Whales ([DFO Fishery Notice linked here](#)) this afternoon. Unfortunately, DFO has dismissed the significant efforts of the recreational community to develop meaningful, measurable plans and have failed to consider the impacts of the restrictions and closures to small communities and businesses along the BC coast.

Northern Chinook

The Minister's May 23rd announcement and the notice today linked Chinook and SRKW issues together. Particularly as it regards to northern chinook fishing opportunities, this is an unfortunate, and completely unnecessary distraction. The issues on the north coast re to do with Skeena and Nass chinook. These runs do not travel much south of the central coast. The Chinook measures announced today for the north coast have nothing to do with SRKW and do not provide a fair or balanced approach to the stakeholders involved. The damage to business and small communities effected by nearly an entire month of a chinook closure in tidal waters and much longer in river will be very significant and long lasting. It is our hope that we will hear additional details from DFO to provide relief to businesses and communities for the damage caused by measures that do not seem to reflect a balanced approach but bowing to political pressure.

Southern Chinook

While there has been much discussion about the chinook measures in the south, they fail to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the SFAB to develop a plan that will address conservation needs, while at the same time retain reliable and consistent opportunity for the recreational sector. The work of the SFAB to develop a proposal to meet those needs has, like the consultation regarding SRKW, been disregarded.

It is clear to see that decisions have been made to appear as though they will make a significant difference to the recovery of SRKW although there is little or no evidence of this. While the recreational community has indicated a willingness to participate in measures that can lead to recovery of Chinook (and SRKW), the measures announced today are much more restrictive than the department itself explained was necessary to satisfy conservation objectives.

Why did this happen?

Meanwhile, efforts to actually rebuild Fraser River Chinook populations through habitat restoration, predator control and strategic enhancement have gone no where. Does DFO really believe it can restore these once great runs by "managing" the now tiny exploitation rate associated with recreational fishing? Chinook and all those that depend on them deserve solutions and investment.

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALE (SRKW) MEASURES ANNOUNCED

Over the past half year, the SFI has worked actively with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to develop sound, science-based approaches to assist the recovery of Southern Resident Killer Whale populations (SRKW). However, rather than utilizing our suggestions and the best scientific information available to implement meaningful and effective measures, DFO has undermined both salmon and halibut fishing by extending the area of finfish closure

well beyond what had been put forward in Pacific Region's consultation documents. The closures, absent of measures to address other factors and without measurable benefit for the whales, seem to be an ill-considered response to pressure from groups that are not interested in scientific facts or meaningful measures to properly aid in the recovery of SRKW.

In February, Sooke anglers and hundreds of anglers across the South Coast, were given a DFO proposal to protect whales. Not surprisingly, recreational anglers were anxious to do their part to protect this iconic species and more than 400 people attended community meetings to discuss the proposal which indicated that either a finfish closure or a salmon only closure from East Point to Sheringham Point would meet DFO's requirements to offer a refuge from competition for SRKW for prey as well as from acoustic and physical disturbance.

Make no mistake: recreational anglers were prepared to do their part.

The recreational community provided its advice, recommended small adjustments to the boundaries as originally proposed, and indicated its willingness to accept actions that would provide measurable benefit to the whales. This was done with the clear understanding that all others who may or do produce physical and acoustic disturbance would be required to adopt similar measures at the same time.

However, rather than implement a recommendation based on solutions provided by the consultation processes, Minister LeBlanc has elected to implement a full finfish closure from June 1st to Sept 31st from East Point to Otter Point, an extended area that was never part of DFO's original proposal.

It is critical for DFO to fully understand the significant limitations of the benefits to SRKWs and the socio-economic impact to the community of these measures.

- To our knowledge no socio-economic impact assessment has been attempted.
- The proposal to include the area from Sheringham Point to Otter Point will produce profound negative social and economic impacts to the adjacent community with minimal if any benefit to the whales.
- The original proposal to implement salmon only or finfish closure starting at Sheringham Point, was conceived as a means of providing protection to whales from both competition for prey as well as acoustic and physical disturbance. The most recent proposal would provide little to no positive benefit to the whales for protection from physical and acoustic disturbance since no measures to reduce the commercial trap fishery or whale watching pressure have been included.
- While the area has not hosted a commercial salmon fishery in decades, the closed area supports a large scale commercial crab fishery which we are told will continue.
- The closed area proposed is a popular spot for the whale watching fleet to "interact" with the whales.

- There is no scientific evidence to suggest that the presence of recreational fishing vessels impacts the whales ability to acquire prey. DFO research has shown that R Pod routinely and successfully hunts among recreational anglers in Northern BC waters.

It is impossible for the sport fishing community to understand why DFO chose to ignore the impacts of other marine use groups and instead targeted only the recreational fishery in a greatly expanded area. The sport fishing and southern Vancouver Island community are deeply concerned that these proposed measures may become permanent and that the sport fishery, which has supported Sooke and Port Renfrew for decades, will come to an end. Worse still, there is fear that this closure would provide no measurable benefit to the whales.

We will continue to urge Minister LeBlanc, and encourage you to send your comments and concerns to DFO and the Minister as well, to undertake the necessary research to fully understand the impacts of all marine activity on SRKWs ability to effectively forage and base management measures on science rather than crass politics.

Until next time, tight lines,
The SFI Team



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