



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Media Release
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Tŝilhqot'in Nation Declares State of Local Emergency in Response to the Status of our Fisheries and the Crisis at Big Bar Slide

Williams Lake, BC: The Tŝilhqot'in Nation has declared a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) in response to the continuing fish crisis at the Big Bar Slide along the Fraser River. The rockslide area poses an immediate threat to Chinook and Sockeye fisheries and consequently directly impacts one of the Tŝilhqot'in peoples' primary food sources.

The Tŝilhqot'in, being caretakers of the Chinook and Sockeye that return to spawn in the Chilcotin watershed, are gravely concerned with the conservation and protection of these precious resources. According to biological monitoring data by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) there currently are no Chinook or Sockeye passing through the rockslide area, and the Tŝilhqot'in National Government (TNG) fisheries monitoring indicates that there are almost no salmon currently in the Chilcotin Watershed. Given this potentially catastrophic situation, and the current lack of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of future mitigation measures to restore passage, it is absolutely critical that every possible Chinook and Sockeye are able to return to the Fraser River. The Tŝilhqot'in Nation calls on DFO to immediately stop all marine and recreational fisheries – non-retention or retention, that access salmon returning to the Fraser River that spawn above the rockslide until there is sufficient evidence that passage has been restored and fish are returning to spawning grounds at a level that is sustainable. The stress and mortality due directly to the marine Recreational fishery (retention and non-retention) is not acceptable under this situation of extreme conservation concern and uncertainty.

Quotes:

Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair, Tŝilhqot'in National Government:

"We are at a critical point – the salmon cannot make it through and there is widespread concern throughout the Nation that the salmon will not make it to their spawning grounds. Currently, DFO is not doing enough. They need to protect every fish that is returning to the Fraser River so that every chance is given for these fish to make it to their spawning grounds. Moving a few hundred fish by helicopter isn't good enough. It won't be enough to sustain our fish that we rely on for sustenance and a way of life. Our people have already been making sacrifices to assist with moose recovery in our territory and this impact to salmon only further threatens our way of life. Our nation expects DFO to work with us towards an effective solution to alleviate this crisis."

Nits'il?in (Chief) Francis Laceese, Tl'esqox First Nations Government:

"It's time that DFO adhere to its own commitments to First Nations and close the marine recreational Chinook fisheries to help conserve this at risk species. We are tired of having to react to environmental disasters that are the result of mismanagement by government and industry. Our people have already being impacted by the decline of Chinook. Salmon is central to our culture and

identity – it is central to our diet, ceremonies and way of life. Protecting this precious resource is of utmost urgency.”

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