



December 11, 2019

Statement from the Tsilhqot'in Nation on Escalating Crisis at the Big Bar Slide site

Williams Lake, BC: The Tsilhqot'in Nation is sounding an alarm on the escalating crisis at the Big Bar Slide site along the Fraser River. The on-going crisis has had dire consequences to the returns of both the Chinook and Sockeye salmon to Tsilhqot'in territory. The slide blocked their passage for the majority of their migratory period and Chinook and sockeye returned to the Tsilhqot'in territory at a fraction of their anticipated abundance. Chinook and Sockeye are a primary and traditional food source for the Tsilhqot'in people. This impact has been so great that this past summer, the Tsilhqot'in Nation declared a Declaration of State of Local Emergency.

In early November, the Tsilhqot'in Nation learned that instream work had not yet taken place to restore natural fish passage at all water levels, and that there is the high possibility that DFO will not have conducted the work necessary to mitigate the slide before the 2020 salmon runs. The Tsilhqot'in wrote the Minister of Fisheries, Ocean and the Canadian Coastguard, urging immediate action be taken to mitigate the slide, including drilling and blasting runs.

If required in-river work is not conducted within the limited low-water season, this winter, natural passage will not be restored in time for the 2020 salmon runs. This would result in massive negative implications for the salmon runs that are central to the Tsilhqot'in traditional practices, including Chilko and Taseko sockeye, and critically threatened Chilcotin Chinook, Chilcotin Steelhead and Interior Fraser Coho.

The current state of the Big Bar Slide is an emergency of the highest priority for these critical wild salmon stocks that the Tsilhqot'in communities rely upon for our way of life, including food security. Inaction could result in the catastrophic failure of entire salmon runs and steelhead. We urge DFO to do all that is humanly possible to correct this sad and dangerous situation and to work closely with First Nations who serve to face the most impact from this crisis should it not be dealt with efficiently and effectively.

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