

Annual Report 2018

Standing up for
BC's Wild Salmon



Message from the Executive Director



This year marked Watershed Watch's 20th year of standing up for B.C.'s wild salmon. To celebrate this milestone, and to honour our founder, Dr. Craig Orr, we threw a party at the Fraser River Discovery Centre in New Westminster in November. It was downright heartwarming to see so many friends and colleagues, to reflect on our shared accomplishments, and to hear strong praise from some of our biggest heroes and allies. But the most powerful thing we took away from that gathering was a new store of energy to fuel our activism for the next 20 years.

As the ecological crisis deepens, it becomes ever more imperative to work every day for a future with wild salmon in it. As one of my mentors says, we do not have the luxury of despair. If nothing else, we owe our kids the opportunity to raise their own kids in a safe climate, with rich natural spaces that can nurture their souls, and their bellies too. That's why we do what we do. Coming together to celebrate our shared values and our accomplishments helps keep us united, hopeful and fired up to keep defending our natural wealth.

Heading into our third decade of standing up for B.C. wild salmon, Watershed Watch is focusing on what we do best: delivering hard-hitting, science-based advocacy, finding solutions through collaboration and partnerships, and engaging citizens, in the community and along the water. I offer my sincere thanks to all who support this important work as volunteers, donors and allies.

For the fish,

Aaron Witt



Safe Passage

16,048 petition signatures

450 rally attendees
1525 phone calls to MLAs and the Premier

After two decades of fighting B.C.'s reckless salmon farming industry, 2018 was a pivotal year. With dozens of provincial salmon farm tenures set to expire in June 2018, First Nations strongly opposed to renewing the tenures and a new provincial government open to mitigating the salmon farm threat, we went all-in on our campaign to get fish farms off wild salmon migration routes.

In 2018, we:

- provided technical support to the 'Namgis, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis and Mamalilikulla First Nations in their government-to-government negotiations with the Province regarding the fate of 20 expired farm tenures in the Nations' territories;
- helped secure passage of two resolutions at the Union of B.C. Municipalities calling for the removal of fish farms from wild salmon migration routes;

- continued to chair the Conservation Regulatory Working Group, a collaboration of conservation groups working together to defend wild salmon from salmon farms;
- published two articles exposing the federal government's gaming of science to delay action;
- led the development of the Declaration in Defence of B.C.'s Wild Salmon, found at SafeSalmon.ca, calling for the removal of open net-pen salmon farms;
- worked with allies to secure dozens of high-profile endorsements of the Safe Salmon declaration (including First Nations, sport & commercial fishers, business leaders, mayors and city councillors);
- organized three successful rallies at MLA offices in Victoria, Port Moody, and Courtenay; and
- co-managed the Safe Salmon website and Facebook page, resulting in 14,000+ signatures, 1200+ citizen phone calls to MLAs and the Premier's office, and 6000+ Facebook followers, all over a 2-month period.

In June 2018, a substantial provincial policy shift required future tenures to not be renewed without consent of host First Nations. In December 2018, the Province and Broughton Archipelago First Nations announced the phasing out of 17 open-net salmon farms in the Broughton Archipelago by 2023 and the immediate removal of one of the most problematic salmon farms in the area.

We continue to work with allies on this important campaign in 2019, shifting focus to the federal government, continuing to support First Nations and monitoring the industry on multiple fronts.



photo: Andrew S. Wright



photo: Roxanna Froese

Defending the Heart of the Fraser

6,000
petition signatures

1810
letters to Minister
Donaldson

This summer, we jumped headfirst into a campaign with allies at the BC Wildlife Federation, BC Rivers Institute, and others, to rally public support and secure long term protection for that ecologically important stretch of the Fraser between Mission and Hope. When we started in July 2018, development permits for Herring and Carey Islands were considered imminent.

The highlights:

- Watershed Watch built a petition website (www.heartofthefraser.ca), letter writing tool and Facebook page, and used these digital tools to educate citizens and mobilize support for protecting the islands.

- An ample advertising budget made possible by a generous donor helped us gather nearly 6000 petition signatures in three months, with 1810 letters sent to the Minister of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations.
- The Facebook page had a total reach of over 1.1 million impressions.

To date, no permits have been granted, and we are cautiously optimistic that our continued efforts will lead to the islands being protected in perpetuity.



photo: Roxanna Froese



Student intern, Mariah Mund, working at our riparian restoration site on Katzie Slough



Photo: Roxanna Froese

Connected Waters

130 volunteer hours
104 water quality sampling sites
100 plants in the ground

In the lower Fraser valley, flood infrastructure blocks over 1500 kilometres of formerly productive salmon habitat.

Our *Connected Waters* campaign aims to reconnect these blocked waterways, pushing for aging flood infrastructure to be replaced with fish-friendly models, and for restoration of the associated waterways into vibrant, healthy salmon habitat. We also organize restoration events including garbage clean-ups, riparian plantings and invasive species removals.

In 2018:

- We lobbied hard, meeting with MPs, MLAs, ministers, mayors, city councillors, First Nation leaders, scientists, government managers, and others.

- We succeeded in getting the Union of B.C. Municipalities to pass a resolution calling on the Province to get serious about fish-friendly flood control.

- We secured endorsement of the *Connected Waters* campaign from the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, which represents 30 First Nations in the lower Fraser area.

- Through mapping, ground-truthing and water quality sampling, we helped identify the highest-priority waterways for restoration.

- We held several clean-ups, canoe tours, riparian plantings and invasive species removals on key waterways and continued our on-the-ground flagship restoration project on Katzie Slough.

- We secured commitment from the City of Pitt Meadows to put in fish-friendly upgrades at the Kennedy Pump Station.



Kennedy pump station



Beach seining on Babine Lake



Fishing Smarter

Our changing climate is decreasing the abundance and diversity of salmon in B.C., while increasing the volatility of returns. DFO's approach to fishery management must adapt for our new climate reality. Innovations in fishing gear and methods can dramatically reduce the impacts of fisheries on endangered salmon runs, as can a transition from mixed-stock to known-stock fisheries. However, federal fishery managers continue to put fisheries ahead of fish. Working with First Nations and other forward-thinking harvesters, we are leading the push for a management regime for a changing climate, founded on sustainable principles tested over millennia.

In 2018:

- We continued representing the public conservation interest at fishery management tables, in collaboration with allies at SkeenaWild, Raincoast, Pacific Streamkeepers, David Suzuki Foundation, and the Steelhead Society of BC.
- We continued supporting Lake Babine Nation and other First Nations in the Skeena watershed to further develop their rights-based commercial fishing operations. In 2018, these fisheries harvested a record-breaking two thirds of the total Skeena River sockeye catch.
- We led a public outreach initiative illustrating how Lake Babine known-stock fishery integrates indigenous principles and knowledge to protect endangered populations while increasing the total commercial catch and gaining direct and indirect economic and social benefits.

- We continued to expose irresponsible fishing, especially for endangered Fraser River chinook and sockeye, conducting numerous high-profile media interviews.
- We led the Marine Conservation Caucus in providing detailed feedback to government on proposed fishing plans and southern resident killer whale recovery.
- We submitted extensive evidence to the Marine Stewardship Council in their annual surveillance audit of B.C.'s commercial salmon fisheries.
- Watershed Watch's Fisheries Advisor, Greg Taylor, was appointed chair of the multi-stakeholder Monitoring & Compliance Panel, providing us with greater influence to improve monitoring and compliance in B.C.'s fisheries.



photo: Eiko Jones Photography



Water for Fish

The frequency and intensity of drought is increasing in B.C. due to climate change. Around the province this summer and fall, salmon streams ran critically low. Though B.C.'s new *Water Sustainability Act* provides tools to fight the effects of drought and keep more water in our streams for fish, the act has not yet been adequately implemented.

In 2018, we:

- joined the Canadian Freshwater Alliance (CFA) and other allies under the banner of OurWaterBC to spur citizen action using the #DefendAgainstDrought letter-writing tool during the summer and fall drought season;
- worked with allied groups to develop and submit water management recommendations to the provincial government;
- authored three op-eds in Vancouver Island papers about local examples of water scarcity and what is needed to address it;
- worked with CFA to survey municipal candidates on water management in key communities on Vancouver Island and the lower mainland, sharing the results with our followers in those areas; and
- worked with experts to collate new data on water scarcity in B.C., to be released in 2019, to counter the public myth of abundance and to spur more robust implementation of the *Water Sustainability Act*.

The Coquitlam Watershed

Coquitlam is our home base and we have been active in the watershed for our entire 20-year history. We work with the Kwikwetlem First Nation to restore sockeye salmon to the Coquitlam River and are a core member of the Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable.

In 2018, we:

- continued as an active participant in the Kwikwetlem Salmon Restoration Program, including administering the adult trap and transport project that helps any returning adult sockeye get past the Coquitlam dam in the fall;
- continued a multi-year project assessing the feasibility of hatchery supplementation to develop a self-sustaining sockeye population in the Coquitlam River;
- continued as the fiscal sponsor for the Coquitlam Watershed Roundtable, ramping up work on issues identified in the Lower Coquitlam River Watershed Plan to tackle invasive species in the watershed, and working with developers to define and implement best practices; and
- were recognized by the City of Coquitlam with a lifetime achievement award for our work in Coquitlam over the past 20 years.



photo: Ilya Herb



photo: Andrew S. Wright

Rebuilding Wild Salmon Populations

Dozens of struggling salmon runs across B.C. are now being considered for listing under Canada's *Species At Risk Act*. Though *Canada's Policy for the Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon* provides an excellent blueprint for managing B.C.'s wild salmon, and rebuilding endangered populations, it has not been implemented. Despite promises to "act on" the recommendations of the *Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon* in the Fraser River, the federal government has done very little.

1,100
letters written

In 2018, we:

- engaged heavily in the Southern B.C. Chinook Strategic Planning Initiative, and the recovery planning process for southern resident killer whales, pushing for stronger measures to protect and rebuild depleted chinook stocks (which are the whales' primary food);
- lobbied government to list endangered Fraser River sockeye and steelhead under the *Species At Risk Act*;
- exposed government inaction on implementing the Cohen Commission recommendations;

- lobbied government to reverse cuts to on-the-ground stock assessment programs securing a commitment from the Minister's office to address the situation;
- met with the director of B.C.'s new Wild Salmon Secretariat and provided a lengthy submission, delving into water management, fishery management, habitat restoration, fish-friendly flood control, hatcheries, and more;
- raised the alarm about deep flaws in the B.C. government's approach to developing a wild salmon strategy; and
- launched a letter writing tool to Ministers Wilkinson and McKenna calling for immediate action to prevent the extinction of Thompson and Chilcotin River steelhead, generating over 1,100 submissions.

Salmon News

Salmon News is the best weekly round-up of stories about salmon and their habitats. Our weekly e-newsletter has a readership of over 7000. Visit watershedwatch.ca to subscribe today.





Building a Wild Salmon Constituency

250 volunteer hours **125** events attended **78** media stories

Across B.C., we hear people say wild salmon are the lifeblood of this province. We know from public opinion polls that a majority of British Columbians share our values around conserving and rebuilding wild salmon. If we want decision makers to take notice, they need to hear from these citizens who care about salmon.

Over the last year, in addition to the organizing activities listed above, we:

- hired four summer students who organized volunteers and engaged with thousands of citizens at dozens of public events in the lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island;

- continued to grow our email list, added over 1500 new Facebook followers, and nearly 1000 new Instagram followers;
- continued producing our weekly Salmon News media round-ups; and
- including our work with allies on the Safe Salmon and Defend the Heart of the Fraser campaigns, engaged with over over 20,000 citizens who care about B.C. wild salmon.





photo: Roxanna Froese

Fighting for a Better Provincial Strategy

This year, the government of B.C. moved to develop a “made-in-B.C. Wild Salmon Strategy,” forming a Wild Salmon Secretariat and convening a Wild Salmon Advisory Council. Unfortunately, the secretariat was highly politicized, and the advisory council was stacked with representatives from the coastal commercial and charter fishing industries, with no representation from academic scientists or conservation advocacy groups like Watershed Watch.

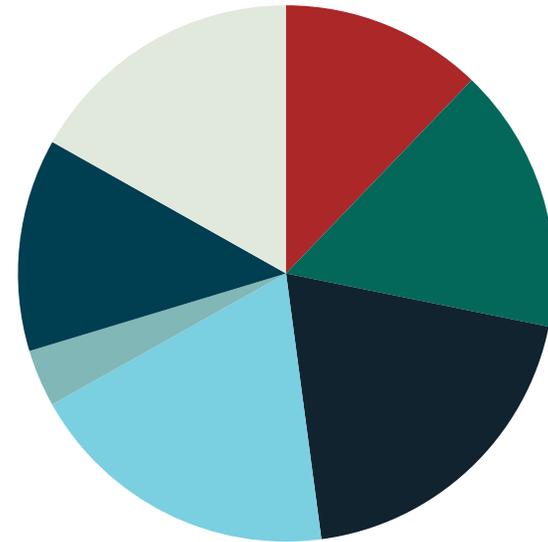
These biases were grossly apparent in the advisory council’s report, *Options for a Made-in-B.C. Wild Salmon Strategy*, released in October. The report focused heavily on growing the commercial fishing industry, ignored non-consumptive economic benefits from wild salmon (like ecotourism) and misrepresented scientific information. Public town hall meetings were announced on very short notice around the winter holidays, with no meetings planned for any interior B.C. communities.

Watershed Watch pushed back hard, in numerous high-profile media stories, in meetings with cabinet ministers and MLAs, and by writing a letter of protest to Premier Horgan endorsed by 13 conservation groups.

Government responded by extending the public comment period, adding a public meeting in Kamloops, and granting us and our allies an audience with provincial Fisheries Minister Lana Popham and the Premier’s Office.

Preventing the province from developing a disastrous salmon policy will be a key focus for us in 2019.

Financial Summary 2018



■ Aquaculture.....	\$110,987
■ Connected Waters	\$145,878
■ Engagement	\$179,702
■ Fisheries & Wild Salmon Policy	\$173,031
■ Water, Energy & Habitat.....	\$31,523
■ Watershed Management & Restoration	\$116,950
■ Administration	\$153,532
Total	\$911,604

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Blume	One Percent for the Planet
Canada Summer Jobs Program	Pacific Salmon & Watersheds Fund
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Coast Outdoors	PayPal Charitable Giving Fund
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Evo Carshare	River Select
Fernwood Coffee Company	Russell Books
Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program	Sea-Run Fly & Tackle
Foamers' Folly Brewing Co.	Sitka Foundation
Fuel-up Protein Bars	Spirit Bear Coffee
Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation	St. Louis Community Foundation
Habitat Conservation Trust Fund	Talok Fisheries
Hippie Snacks	Terrevive Fund
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photo: Tavish Campbell

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Thank you for supporting our efforts to defend and rebuild B.C.'s wild salmon!