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Gord Johns

Member of Parliament
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Hon. Catherine McKenna
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Hon. Bernadette Jordan
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

September 22, 2020

Dear Ministers,

We are writing today regarding the need for wild salmon habitat to be considered when flood mitigation infrastructure projects are approved for federal infrastructure funding.

On the Lower Fraser River, flood mitigation structures have affected a significant amount of wild salmon rearing habitat. The organization Watershed Watch has estimated that alarmingly, 1,500 kilometres of current or potential fish habitat in the lower Fraser River system has been blocked by flood infrastructure.

Salmon-friendly infrastructure options exist, however current federal infrastructure funding programs neither require upgrades that restore fish habitat nor do they provide for the extra cost of implementing such solutions. With tight budgets and limited revenue, local governments have been unable or unwilling to finance the additional costs. The result is that tens of millions of dollars have been spent on upgrades to conventional flood mitigation structures such as pump stations without addressing their negative impacts on the Fraser River's wild salmon and other fish populations. Each of these investments represents a missed opportunity to restore the habitat of British Columbia's iconic wild salmon.

Given the dire state of Fraser River wild salmon stocks, we urge you to take timely action in your respective roles to address this situation. There are three changes we believe are necessary:

1. Establish a set of best practices for flood mitigation infrastructure that protect fish and their habitat, including the use of natural infrastructure solutions;
2. Require that all upgrades to existing flood mitigation infrastructure incorporate these best practices as a condition of federal funding; and
3. Enhance federal funding programs to account for the increased cost of implementing fish-friendly infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We hope that working together we can ensure future infrastructure investments contribute to a positive future for wild salmon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gord Johns". The signature is stylized with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gord Johns
MP, Courtenay-Alberni
NDP Critic for Fisheries

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Taylor Bachrach". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Taylor Bachrach
MP, Skeena-Bulkley Valley
NDP Critic for Infrastructure
And Communities