



March 17, 2022

The Honourable Mike Dunleavy  
Governor of Alaska  
3rd Floor, State Capitol  
PO Box 110001  
Juneau, AK 99811  
*Sent via webform*

Re: Stewardship of B.C.-born salmon swimming through Alaskan waters

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

We are a coalition of Canadian conservation groups seeking to conserve and rebuild wild Pacific salmon populations in our home waters. We are gravely concerned over the growing and unsustainable impacts commercial salmon fisheries in parts of Southeast Alaska are having on B.C.-bound salmon runs. The impacts from these fisheries on depleted B.C. salmon populations represent a significant gap in the Pacific Salmon Treaty and must be addressed with urgency.

Canadian Pacific salmon populations are hitting record lows and over the past few years, commercial, recreational and Indigenous fisheries in B.C. have seen unprecedented closures with severe economic, social and cultural impacts in our communities. At the same time, Alaskan harvests of these B.C.-bound salmon have continued and, in some cases, grown.

A [report](#) recently commissioned by SkeenaWild Conservation Trust and Watershed Watch Salmon Society found that:

- In 2021, over 650,000 Canadian-origin sockeye were caught in Southeast Alaska, compared with the 110,000 sockeye commercially harvested in all of B.C. The District 104 fishery alone caught over 410,000 Canadian sockeye. And the 110,000 sockeye that were caught last year by B.C. fishers do not come from a population that migrates through Alaska.
- Alaskan fisheries harvested 470,000 Skeena River sockeye (almost 30% of the total run), 93,000 Nass River sockeye, and 82,000 Fraser River sockeye, while Canadian commercial fisheries for these populations were shut down due to conservation concerns.
- Alaska provides little or no information on how many Canadian-origin chum, pink, steelhead and coho salmon are caught in Southeast Alaska each year, but the number is likely in the millions.

- Alaska provides no information on how many steelhead and Chinook are discarded and die in Southeast Alaskan net fisheries, and what populations these discarded fish are from.

By way of example, B.C.'s vitally important Skeena and Nass Rivers saw zero commercial fishing in 2021, while right across the border in Districts 101 to 106, your fishers logged over 3000 boat days and harvested almost 30% of the entire Skeena River sockeye run. And across B.C., many Indigenous communities were unable to meet their food needs. These same Southeast Alaskan fisheries are also known to harvest co-migrating Skeena River steelhead, the backbone of a multimillion-dollar recreational fishery drawing in anglers from around the world, but particularly the United States. Due to record low steelhead abundance, that fishery was shut down in 2021, for the first time in its history.

We don't know the true impact of the Southeast Alaskan fishery on Skeena and other B.C. steelhead populations because Alaska is not monitoring their catch of non-target species and does not require their live release. Common knowledge of Southeast Alaska seine fishing practices indicates the vast majority of the non-target catch is discarded dead.

The aforementioned report speaks to similar impacts on B.C. salmon returns from northern B.C. through to the Fraser River. Numerous First Nations across B.C. have expressed concern about the impact of Alaskan interception fisheries on their ability to access salmon for constitutionally protected food, social, and ceremonial purposes.

We request the following measures be taken to substantially reduce Alaskan impacts, aid Canadian rebuilding efforts for depleted Canadian-origin salmon populations that migrate through our shared waters, improve the conservation efficacy of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, and bring your fisheries in Southeast Alaska up to the high management standards your state applies to Alaskan-born salmon populations:

1. Close the District 104 net fishery (which intercepts large numbers of B.C.-bound salmon) and move those vessels to inside waters where they will target Alaska-origin stocks and where the majority of the Southeast Alaska seine fleet already fishes.
2. Reduce harvest rates in other Southeast Alaska salmon fisheries to levels that do not contribute to overfishing of Canadian-origin stocks (i.e., harvest below escapement goals and/or biological reference points).
3. Implement catch reporting for all target and non-target species, with fishery-independent verification, as is required in Canadian commercial salmon fisheries.
4. Require fishers to release bycatch species back to the water immediately, with the "least possible harm," and implement sorting practices that enable live release, consistent with the same condition of licence in B.C. fisheries.

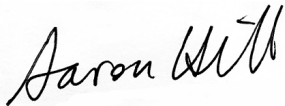
5. Support an immediate independent review of the Pacific Salmon Treaty to examine whether its core principles are being met and work with the Canadian and US governments to immediately revise those provisions of the treaty that are failing to prevent interception and overfishing of depleted salmon populations by either country.

Alaska has a reputation as a world leader in responsible fisheries management. However, the interception fisheries in Southeast Alaska that target B.C.-bound salmon do not meet your state's own rigorous management standards and would likely be challenged under your state's constitution if they were impacting Alaskan salmon populations to the same degree they are impacting B.C. salmon populations.

Finally, we would like to meet with you or a designated representative from your office to discuss our concerns and proposed solutions.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Aaron Hill  
Watershed Watch Salmon Society



Greg Knox  
SkeenaWild Conservation Trust



Misty MacDuffee  
Raincoast Conservation Foundation



Scott Carlson  
Coastal Rivers Conservancy

c. Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Hon. Joyce Murray, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and Canadian Coast Guard; Hon. John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia; Hon. Josie Osborne, Minister of Land, Water and Natural Resource Stewardship, Hon. Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; Fin Donnelly, MLA, Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture; First Nations Fisheries Council; Coastal First Nations; Skeena Fisheries Commission; North Coast Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society; Nisga'a Lisims Government; Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (Uu-a-thluk Fisheries); Island Marine Aquatic Working Group; Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance; Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance; Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus; B.C. Members of Parliament; Pacific Salmon Commission (commissioners).