

Honourable Geoff Regan, Minister
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Room 107, Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Re Implementation of a New Wild Salmon Policy

Dear Minister,

Your plan to implement a new salmon policy in the Pacific Region while removing 80 staff positions has been received with great disappointment on the west coast. After twenty-seven years, the Region's volunteer stewardship community remains an essential and patient partner in your Department's effort to carry out its mission. Such a commitment deserves a better product from Ottawa, and it must be continually earned.

I urge you to simply serve the mandate you already have; rather than create new policy, find the means to enforce the Fisheries Act in the Pacific Region and stop the slow steady human destruction of BC watersheds, including wetlands, urban streams, estuaries and marine foreshore. It is time to allocate resources so that Fishery Officers and habitat biologists can effectively enforce the Act and collect the data needed to make sound biological decisions. I also encourage you to learn about and acknowledge the contribution of Community Advisors and their volunteer partners.

Despite their tireless efforts to write the music, Regional DFO Managers are unable to hire the musicians. You can, and this action will earn you the continued support of your community partners.

You must demonstrate leadership in this Region by securing the dollars required to protect salmon and salmon habitat, remove the bogus \$4M SEP debt, thereby matching the considerable contribution that your volunteer partners offer. It is unrealistic to expect that they will continue their efforts to restore Salmonid populations and habitat without a commitment from your Department to provide protection.

I have attached important information for you to consider, and our organization would be pleased to discuss this further with you or your staff.

Please act quickly – for the sake of the Pacific Salmon and the community partnerships that your staff works so diligently to cultivate and maintain.

Sincerely yours,

Elisa Shields
volunteer with the Sooke Salmon Enhancement Society
<http://www.sookesalmonenhancementsociety.com/>

Distribution List

- Right Honourable Paul Martin, Member of Parliament (LaSalle-Emard)
- Honourable David Anderson, Member of Parliament (Victoria)
- Honourable Keith Martin, Member of Parliament (Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca)
- Larry Murray, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Deputy Minister)
- Jean-Claude Bouchard, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Associate Deputy Minister)
- Sue Farlinger, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (OHEB Director, Pacific RHQ)

What Your Volunteer Partner Wants You to Know

- › The Pacific Region's volunteer stewardship community – 20,000 strong - strategically enhances, restores and monitors salmon populations and habitat conditions of coastal and inland watersheds. We are skilled, experienced and committed fish culturists, streamkeepers, educators, watershed planners and more. We lead the way in delivering key DFO concepts like conservation and stewardship. As a Minister of State, you are very fortunate to enjoy this level of regional, apolitical support for your Department's programs and aspirations.
- › In the twenty-seven short years since the Salmonid Enhancement Program (SEP) landed on this coast, Community Advisors (CA's) have helped broaden our focus from salmon stock building to habitat restoration to conservation-based watershed planning. Our community - the CA's clients – accepts these new challenges without losing our sense of history or the strength of our collective commitment.
- › With \$3M – less than 2% of the Pacific Region's total budget - CA's currently support the activities of SEP volunteers, and it is common knowledge that DFO cannot imagine meeting its mandate without this partnership. It is the best “bang for your buck” of any federal program ever put to ground, but your field workers are over-subscribed and under-valued. Their work here is off the radar in Ottawa, and you have no plans to hire more Community Advisors or habitat biologists.
- › The Wild Salmon Policy – to be implemented as soon as May 31/05 - states repeatedly that the Pacific Region of DFO will orchestrate it with “existing” resources. During the 2006 fiscal year, your Department will concurrently lose another 400 positions nationally – 80 in the Pacific Region alone. The definition of “existing” is about to change, your legions of volunteers are aware of this, and they appreciate that this will effectively remove any remaining vestige of ability for the Department to protect salmon habitat.