



January 27, 2022

Honourable Joyce Murray, Minister
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Honourable Lana Popham, Minister
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

CC: Mr. Fin Donnelly, Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture

RE: Extinction of steelhead in BC

Dear Ministers,

As you are aware, many of BC's steelhead populations are at the point of functional extinction with little optimism toward natural recovery without immediate recovery initiatives. The demise of interior Fraser steelhead has been documented for decades, and now the Skeena system populations are in extreme decline, with only 5,300 individuals projected for the 2021 brood year, which is dramatically below the required conservation thresholds. In-river retention fisheries and predation will further reduce the lowest recorded numbers in 60 years.

The Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia supports the many organizations calling for immediate actions toward reversing province-wide extinction trends. Numerous studies over the past decade and prior have identified the priority causes of severe declines, and science-based recovery options have been documented. This was highlighted in past initiatives such as the Provincial Steelhead Summit, Georgia Basin Steelhead Recovery Plan and Provincial Steelhead Management Plan.

Unfortunately, implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of these peer-reviewed documents, which included significant input from the public fishery and others, has not started yet. We don't believe more studies are required, instead, we encourage federal, provincial and First Nations governments to work collaboratively with all the concerned sectors dedicated to preserving this iconic species that are so integral to our river ecosystems. What is required is prompt development and commitment to an 'Emergency Steelhead Recovery Plan'.

Recent discussions with fishing interests at various levels and venues have included staff from your department supporting truly collaborative actions toward developing and initiating an immediate recovery plan to attempt to reverse this slide to extinction. Past discussions through collaborative tables with First Nations also indicate their concerns regarding steelhead populations, particularly in the Fraser system. We believe what is required now is a firm

commitment to working together through respectful dialogue toward initiating the immediate and ongoing solutions to save these precious icons of our wild rivers.

The call for an 'Emergency Provincial Steelhead Recovery Plan' is supported by other major provincial organizations, and the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia can play an active role in working with these groups and your governments toward reversing the current extinction crisis.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns and the need for immediate action. Your comments in response are greatly appreciated.

ORCBC is an umbrella organization composed of nearly 60 organizational members representing the broad and diverse spectrum of outdoor recreation user groups in BC, including paddlers, hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, quad riders, 4WDs, recreational fishers and nature interests. We work to promote and advocate for access to and responsible use of BC's outdoors for public recreation, build bridges between outdoor recreation groups and represent the broad interests of the outdoor recreation community to government and industry. We indirectly represent more than 100,000 British Columbians.

Sincerely,



Louise Pedersen
Executive Director | [Outdoor Recreation Council of BC](#)