



BACKGROUND

Salmon in BC

Salmon are at the heart of British Columbia's culture, economy and environment. The well-being of our salmon is a direct reflection of how we are doing as stewards of our environment.

Cultural, economic and ecological value

- People and salmon have maintained a complex relationship in the Pacific Northwest for at least 10,000 years. B.C. First Nations have a deep spiritual relationship with salmon dating back thousands of years, and many First Nations communities are founded on traditional fishing grounds.
- Salmon are a critical part of B.C. commercial fishing, with about 28 million salmon caught annually. BC sport fishing and wilderness tourism attract more than \$1 billion in spending annually.
- Salmon have evolved over eons to be interdependent with all elements of their environment. Pacific salmon carry nutrients from the sea back to our freshwater streams, fertilizing B.C.'s forest ecosystems and supporting about 137 species (plants, insects, birds, mammals, other fish, etc).

Management

- Fisheries management seeks to conserve salmon diversity and sustain fisheries, fulfill First Nations' rights to food, social and ceremonial fishing, and distribute fishing opportunities amongst all users.
- Many environmental problems affect salmon. These include climate conditions that change flows and temperatures of streams, and changes that impact Nature's cycles (e.g., Mountain Pine Beetle outbreak and invasive species).
- Salmon habitat can be lost due to pressures from development. Some forestry, agriculture and mining industry practices can destroy salmon habitat, as can urban development.
- Managers deal with inherently variable environments, including ocean conditions that remain largely unexplained but directly contribute to declines in salmon production.

Our salmon community and BC's Living Rivers Trust Fund

In many BC communities, stewardship groups largely staffed by volunteers work to reduce the impact of human behaviours on the well-being of salmon. Operating in the Fraser Basin, Georgia Basin, Vancouver Island and the Skeena Watershed for the past six years, the Living Rivers Trust Fund has enabled community-led work by funding projects and strategically fostering collaboration, innovation, capacity and leadership. Living Rivers projects have

- restored critical salmon habitat in key areas of the province,
- improved the information and methods available for fisheries management,
- increased the engagement of First Nations in watershed and fisheries stewardship,
- convened diverse and even contentious perspectives to address common interests in watersheds and fisheries,
- improved management of water quality and quantity and
- engaged strategic audiences with action for and improved understanding of their watersheds.

Examples of the several hundred projects supported to date include

- the Count on Salmon initiative, that applied innovative methods to improve in-season assessments about numbers and types of salmon as they migrate through the lower Fraser River
- enhanced steelhead monitoring and management planning on the Skeena River
- the single largest habitat restoration project on Vancouver Island at Stoltz Bluff on the Cowichan River
- the Millstone River falls bypass fishway in Nanaimo
- Salmon-Safe BC, an eco-certification program linking land management practices in agricultural and urban watersheds with the protection of salmon in their local streams
- the Chehalis trail to resolve longstanding conflicts between First Nations and sport fishers over river access
- Catalyst Paper's efforts to build a new \$2 Million saddle dam at Robertson Creek to benefit salmon sustainability in the Somass watershed
- peer-to-peer education and services for the agricultural sector on maintaining riparian land
- improved catch monitoring data for First Nations fisheries through software introduction and training
- conversion of sludge from sewage treatment into fertilizer pellets for treating low productivity salmon streams
- watershed management planning for the Bonaparte, Capilano-Seymour, Chilko, Coquitlam, Cowichan, Englishman, Horsefly, Nicola, Salmon, Skeena, Somass and Theodosia Rivers and Cultus and Shuswap Lakes,
- bringing together government and industry to build a framework for collaborative watershed governance in BC

Salmon journey

- Pacific salmon in BC include seven species: sockeye, pink, chum, coho and Chinook, steelhead and cutthroat trout.
- The vast majority of Pacific salmon are anadromous: born in freshwater streams ("home stream"), spend some or all of their adult lives in the ocean, return to their home stream to spawn, and then die soon after spawning to support the next generation of salmon.
- Chinook salmon are known to travel more than 16,000 kilometres to and from the Pacific Ocean.
- During ocean migration, salmon travel distances as great as 56 kilometres per day, using coastal currents to propel them forward.
- An estimated 10 billion salmon smolts enter the Gulf of Alaska from surrounding North American rivers each year.
- Pacific salmon utilize streams throughout approximately three-quarters of British Columbia.

Salmon as a symbol of BC

In the minds of many people, salmon are already a symbol of our great province. Salmon images are favoured by our artists and tourism organizations because they have come to define how we see ourselves and how the world sees us. However, we have no official fish. Six other BC emblems have been designated over the past 60 years:

- dogwood as official flower, 1956
- jade as official mineral, 1968
- BC tartan as official tartan, 1974
- Steller's jay as official bird, 1987
- western red cedar as official tree, 1988
- spirit bear as official mammal, 2006