



**PACIFIC WILD ALLIANCE**

1529 AMELIA STREET

VICTORIA, BC

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For immediate release

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### **DFO moves to open controversial herring fishery**

-Department ignores wide-spread conservation, economic and cultural concerns-

**(Victoria, British Columbia)** Today, Pacific Wild and 70 concerned environmental conservation and marine tourism organizations delivered a letter to Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Bernadette Jordan, demanding an immediate suspension of the commercial Pacific herring fishery to protect coastal livelihoods and ecosystems.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada released the new management plan for herring today, recommending a 20% harvest of herring in the Strait of Georgia. This harvest rate is consistent with past years, which has contributed to a 60% decline in the population size since 2016. If approved by the Fisheries Minister, the roe fishery will open in early March 2020, despite opposition from First Nations, conservation groups, business owners, and coastal communities. The Department had already opened the Food and Bait fishery for herring on November 26.

Pacific herring are important food for Chinook salmon (the main prey of Southern Resident orcas), humpback whales, and other commercially important species. Catching 20% of the herring population every year is contributing to an environmental crisis in the Salish Sea, where Chinook salmon and Southern Resident orcas are already endangered. Representatives of the marine tourism industry oppose the herring fishery, because it jeopardizes the basis of their livelihoods. Marine tourism generates hundreds of millions of dollars for the B.C. economy and employs thousands of people. Whale watching alone generates approximately \$250 million annually.

“I have witnessed the collapse of herring in the North Atlantic, and the result will be the same in B.C., unless Canada does more to protect these fragile stocks. As a marine tourism operator, my livelihood and that of countless others directly depends on the health of herring.”

Colin Griffinson, Captain, Pacific Yellowfin Luxury Adventure Charters: 604-454-4900,  
[colingriffinson@gmail.com](mailto:colingriffinson@gmail.com)

“Herring are a keystone species and a pivotal nutritional component to the Salish Sea, which is one of the most biodiverse regions of the world. Suspending the herring fishery should be the first step towards population recovery.”

Brett Soberg, Owner and Operator, Eagle Wing Whale & Wildlife Tours: 250-213-7669,  
[brett@eaglewingtours.com](mailto:brett@eaglewingtours.com)

“DFO’s refusal to protect our remaining herring stocks by recommending another year of unsustainable fishing completely undermines its own conservation mandate. It is our sincere hope that the new Fisheries Minister, Bernadette Jordan, reconsiders this destructive fishery.”

Ian McAllister, Executive Director, Pacific Wild: 250-882-7246, [ian@pacificwild.org](mailto:ian@pacificwild.org)

## **BACKGROUND**

- The Minister of Fisheries will be asked to approve the IFMP, following a 30-day public consultation period, which is open until January 17, 2020. Comments may be provided in writing to Victoria Postlethwaite, Regional Herring Officer, at [Victoria.Postlethwaite@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Victoria.Postlethwaite@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).
- In the first two weeks of this year’s Food and Bait fishery, seiners were unable to catch any herring, which is highly unusual. This suggests fewer herring are migrating into the Strait of Georgia than in previous years, which is cause for alarm.
- Fisheries and Oceans has conducted no research on the ecosystem impacts of the fishery, despite claiming they are managing for ecosystem needs. The response to an Access to Information request from Pacific Wild was, “Please note that the Fisheries Management branch and Science branch of our Pacific region [*sic*] advised us that they will be providing a Nil response ... We have been advised that there is no other research that DFO has done regarding the impacts the commercial herring fishery has on southern resident killer whales.”
- In 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) biologists overestimated the number of herring in the Strait of Georgia by 30%, which caused overfishing by commercial fisheries.
- Herring are 62% of the diet for Chinook salmon. In turn, this species of salmon is the main food source for critically endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.
- MP for Courtenay-Alberni and NDP Fisheries Critic, Gord Johns, has tabled a written petition in the House of Commons, asking for an immediate suspension of commercial herring fisheries in the Strait of Georgia.

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Visual assets:**

Images of Pacific herring and the commercial roe fishery are available at <https://bit.ly/2lZywdB>