

Skeena Steelhead Need Immediate Action

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Skeena Watershed steelhead lodges and local businesses urge DFO and Province of BC to immediately close commercial fisheries to protect Steelhead Populations.

To date, steelhead returns are low and we are currently in a critical migration period for Steelhead into the Skeena. Yet, as we speak commercial net fisheries are in full force at the mouth of Skeena. The commercial net fisheries and so called "selective" gill nets indiscriminately catch and kill 20 – 40% of Steelhead and the long-term impacts are likely higher.

Doing nothing now means upstream communities, lodges and local business may have to bear the conservation burden. The value of Skeena Steelhead and Salmon for upstream communities and the tourism sector cannot be overstated. A 2008 study showed a \$52.8 million economic impact from Sport Skeena Salmon and Steelhead, surpassing the \$15.2 million from commercial fishing. The Northern BC Tourism Industry generated \$1.1 billion in direct visitor spending in 2019. Despite these figures, local tourism businesses often go unheard, and a more holistic approach to steelhead management is needed.

The newly appointed federal Minister of DFO, Diane LeBouthillier, is responsible for managing commercial fisheries, and the provincial Minister of Water, Land Resource Stewardship, Nathan Cullen, is responsible for managing Steelhead and their habitat. We call on both to step up immediately and provide leadership on this urgent issue.

Longer term solutions include providing upstream steelhead stakeholders a seat at the decision-making table and implementing selective gear, as promised under the \$647 million federal Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative.

For further information, please contact:

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