



Regional Recreational Fishery Updates Spring 2024

Updated January 2024



Spring 2024 Updates:

Chinook Conservation	3
Salmon – IFMP	5
Groundfish	5
a. Halibut	5
b. Rockfish	6
Invertebrates.....	7
a. Crab	7
b. Intertidal Bivalves.....	7
c. Prawn	8
d. Crab and Prawn Buoys/Floats	9
Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative.....	9
a. Regulatory and Licensing Reform	10
b. Catch Monitoring and Reporting	11
Salmon Allocation Policy Review	12
Marine Protected Areas.....	13
a. Northern Shelf Bioregion	13
b. Glass Sponge Reefs	14
SFAB Reconciliation Committees	15
SFAB Process Review	15
a. Prior Modernization Project Work.....	15
b. SFAB Support	16
c. Next Steps for Project	16
d. 2023 and Beyond	17
App Integration	17
a. The Beginning – FRIS 2017	17
b. Launched! – Electronic Licensing and Catch Recording 2023.....	18
Southern Resident Killer Whale Management Measures.....	18
Appendix 1: Regulatory Amendment Proposals for the <i>BC Sport Fishing Regulations, 1996</i>	1



Chinook Conservation

Southern B.C./Fraser Chinook: In recent years, DFO has implemented fisheries management measures to support the recovery of at risk Fraser River and Southern B.C. Chinook populations (see details for Fraser Chinook here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans/news/2020/06/2020-fraser-river-chinook-salmonmanagement-measures.html>). These measures were developed following consultation with First Nations communities, recreational and commercial harvesters, and environmental organizations. These measures include precautionary fishery restrictions intended to provide a high degree of protection to at-risk Fraser Spring 42, Spring 52 and Summer 52 Chinook. The management objective was to allow as many fish to pass through to the spawning grounds as possible, which was expected to reduce overall Canadian fishery mortalities on these populations to very low levels. In 2023, additional restrictions on recreational and commercial fisheries were put in place to protect the Fraser River Summer 5-2 stock management unit. An assessment of fishery mortalities for the 2023 season will require additional time to process coded-wire tags, stock composition information, and an evaluation of impacts of the Big Bar rockslide; information to support this assessment is expected to be available in the Fall of 2024.

For 2024 and beyond, ongoing precautionary fishery management actions to support conservation and promote the rebuilding of these stocks will be needed. Additional discussions on management measures may be required to address other Chinook stocks of conservation concern and Pacific Salmon Treaty obligations for specified Chinook stocks.

Addressing the above concerns for Southern BC Chinook will require continued restrictions and/or closures to fisheries in times and areas where these stocks are encountered in Northern and Southern B.C., including First Nations, recreational, and commercial fisheries in marine areas and the Fraser River. The Department will be exploring different options and consulting on those options through the IFMP process.

Northern BC / Skeena Chinook: There has been a trend of below average returns of Chinook to North Coast systems, which began in 2017. For 2023, in response to this continued trend in poor productivity, the Department continued and increased a suite of management measures intended to reduce the overall exploitation rates on Skeena and Nass Chinook. The 2023 restrictions also included an extended closure of the Area F commercial troll fishery in Northern BC until August 16, to pass through Fraser Summer 41 Chinook in order to support Fraser First Nations FSC harvests. This change in fishery timing was part of a suite of management measures which included a period of non-retention for recreational fisheries, and reduced retention limits. Several First Nations have identified Northern B.C. Chinook as a priority for the 2024/25 salmon management cycle, including the continuation of the precautionary approach to support recovery.



While there is an improving trend regarding escapement estimates of Skeena and Nass Chinook over the previous five years, the 2024 expectation is that North Coast Chinook remain in a period of reduced productivity; therefore, continued precautionary management measures will be required. The Department intends to engage with First Nations and stakeholders both bilaterally and as part of the 2024 IFMP planning process to develop fishing plans, which will be informed by the management actions implemented in recent seasons.

Mark Selective Fisheries (MSF): Similar to the 2022 opportunities, MSF pilots were included during consultation on the 2023/24 Southern BC Salmon IFMP. Commencing April 1, 2023, the MSF pilot opportunities continued in portions of Areas 12, 13, 15, and Subarea 20-5. The MSF in Area 16 was modified to permit only the retention of marked Chinook. For Spring 2023, the Department consulted on additional MSF opportunities in Victoria, Juan de Fuca Strait, Saanich-Gulf Islands and Howe Sound. Two new MSF were approved and opened May 3, 2023, in Victoria and Saanich-Gulf Islands ([Fisheries and Oceans Canada | Fishery Notices \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)). It is anticipated that the pilot MSF noted above and in the approved IFMP will re-open April 1, 2024. Data generated from these opportunities will be used to support post-season evaluation and future decision-making on expansion of MSF. Also included in the 2023/24 IFMP was the March MSF in portions of Areas 19 and 20 (Juan de Fuca Strait and Haro Strait). This opening will see a regulation change during the opening March 1 to 31, 2024, moving to retention of only hatchery-marked Chinook (no retention of unmarked Chinook) over the minimum legal length.

DFO intends to consider MSF fisheries as part of a longer-term, integrated approach for Pacific salmon management through the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI). Opportunities for mark-selective fisheries require consideration of the issues and resource requirements needed to mitigate the short- and long-term concerns. After the Department released its discussion paper *Implementing Hatchery Mass Marking (MM) and Mark-selective Fisheries (MSF) for Chinook Salmon* (2022), DFO hosted a series of MM/MSF technical workshops with interested external groups to discuss the key issues and technical challenges of MM/MSF implementation. Topics discussed include enhanced monitoring plans including assessment of stock composition for releases, and mark-rate in areas open to MSF; risk evaluation and how to improve transparency; post-season data review and reporting; and MM for genetic management objectives. Feedback from the workshop process informed DFO's development of a draft MSF Implementation Framework, which is anticipated to be released in early 2024, and to be consulted on with the IFMP. The MSF Implementation Framework is designed to support longer term decision making using risk-based, transparent and collaborative way forward for guiding evaluation, decision making, implementation and review of MSFs in B.C. waters targeting adipose fin-clipped hatchery Chinook Salmon.

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Salmon – IFMP

The Department released the 2023/24 North Coast and South Coast IFMPs on July 13, 2023. The IFMPs set out the policy framework that guides decision making, general objectives relating to management of stocks of concern, enhancement and enforcement, as well as decision guidelines for a range of fisheries. The 2023/24 Salmon IFMPs are valid until May 31, 2024.

Copies of the final IFMP can be found here:

Northern BC: [Pacific region final integrated fisheries management plan, June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024 : salmon, northern BC \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)

Southern BC: [Pacific region final integrated fisheries management plan, June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024 : salmon, southern BC \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)

The Department is currently working on development of the 2024/25 North Coast and South Coast IFMPs, including reviewing the consultation process and timelines. Additional details will be provided when they become available.

Groundfish

a. Halibut

Year-to-date recreational Halibut catch for the 2023 season (to December 31, 2023) is estimated to be 889,881 lbs, resulting in an estimated remaining balance of -9,631 lbs. on the 2023 recreational Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 880,250 lbs. Note, this is an in-season catch estimate. The final estimate is anticipated to be available by Spring 2024.

Harvest advice for the 2024 Halibut season was considered at the 100th Session of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Annual Meeting. The 2024 recreational TAC for season is 836,250 lbs., and the SFAB Halibut Working Group will be reviewing when to open the season on January 2024.

The SFAB Halibut Working Group will be meeting in January and February 2024 to discuss recommendations for management measures for 2024/25 Conditions of Licence.

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b. Rockfish

2023 Rockfish catch estimates (as of 30th September, 2023) and conservation measures were discussed during the Groundfish/Shellfish Working Group meeting on November 28, 2023.

Descending devices continue to aid in the survivability of Rockfish that are being returned to the ocean, which would otherwise suffer fatal barotrauma effects. For 2024/25, per a condition of licence, the use of a descender device remains mandatory when releasing Rockfish:

“Anglers in vessels shall immediately return all Rockfish that are not being retained to the water and to a similar depth from which they were caught by use of an inverted weighted barbless hook or other purpose-built descender device.”

Groundfish/Shellfish Working Group had requested DFO look into a credit on mortality savings from descender device usage for 2023/24 season. The Groundfish Management Unit and the Recreational Management team had discussions internally and were successful in seeking an approval for a 10% credit towards use of descending device for 2023/24 season.

The Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) recently completed a Science Response entitled *Management Procedures Update and Catch Advice for 2023/24-2026/27 Fishing Seasons for Outside Yelloweye Rockfish (Sebastes ruberrimus) in the Pacific Region* and the pre-publication was approved for distribution. The scientific advice is intended to inform Management Procedures choices for 2024/25-2026/27 fishing years and support consultations with Indigenous groups and stakeholders to determine reference points, management objectives, and rebuilding targets for Outside Yelloweye. The Groundfish Management Unit (GMU) consulted on this document in the Fall of 2023 with the objective of collecting input and advice for the 2024/25 Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP). Recreational sector consultation took place at the November 28th Groundfish/Shellfish Working Group meeting.

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Invertebrates

a. Crab

Shore Crabs

There have been recent reports of overharvest of shore crabs in the Sechelt area. Anecdotally, recreational fishers travelling from the Lower Mainland to harvest bivalves in those areas are having a detrimental impact on shore crabs on some local beaches. Currently, the recreational daily limit on shore crab is 75, except Areas 28 and 29 as well as the Strait of Georgia side of Sechelt where the limit is zero. This has further complicated the issue near Sechelt as the Strait of Georgia side of Sechelt has a limit of zero, while Sechelt Inlet side has a daily limit of 75.

There were concerns around 2005 with respect to overharvest of shore crab in the Lower Mainland (Areas 28/29), and the limit was dropped to zero in those Areas. At the time, DFO Science advice indicated a daily limit of 75 was high and a daily limit of 25 would be more adequate given the lack of information about their ecosystem function, aside from performing a scavenging role. In addition, Science noted shore crab are entirely intertidal and very vulnerable to directed harvest.

The current 75 crab per day limit is under periodic review to address these concerns of overharvest. DFO is seeking feedback on reducing the limit to 25 coastwide excluding Areas 28 and 29 for the 2025/26 IFMP.

Puget Sound King Crab and Brown Box Crab

Currently Dungeness crab, Red Rock crab, and King crab are restricted to the harvest of males only. DFO will extend this sex restriction to Puget Sound King crab and brown box crab as soon as is feasible, either through licence conditions or a regulation change.

Crab Holding Cages

It has come to the Department's attention in recent years that some recreational harvesters have been using cages to store crab from multiple licences or multiple days of possession limits, similar to live cages that the commercial fishery uses. It was not intended that recreational regulations and conditions of licence permit this activity. Due to the issues that arise around enforceability of daily or possession limits when live cages are used in the recreational fishery, as well as facilitation of laundering recreational crab into the commercial fishery, DFO will continue to investigate this issue and further discussion with the SFAB may occur throughout the year.

b. Intertidal Bivalves

Anyone harvesting bivalve shellfish, i.e. shellfish with two shells, including all clam species, oysters, cockles, mussels, and scallops, is responsible for ensuring that an area is designated as safe for harvesting. Eating contaminated shellfish can cause serious illness or be fatal. Harvesting opportunities and closures change often throughout the year for conservation or public health reasons. Check the DFO real-time [bivalve shellfish](#)



[safety harvesting map https://gisp.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=CSSP_Public_En_Site&locale=en](https://gisp.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=CSSP_Public_En_Site&locale=en) to ensure that it's legal and safe to harvest, every time you head out to fish. If you are a recreational harvester, you also need to review recreational shellfish [harvesting opportunities and limits](#) and ensure you are carrying a current tidal waters sport fishing licence. Shellfish should not be harvested in unmonitored areas.

Because of the risk of sanitary contamination, all bivalve shellfish harvesting is permanently closed within the following boundaries, often marked with signage or red concrete markers:

- 300 metres around industrial, municipal and sewage treatment plant outfall discharges
- 125 metres around a marina, ferry wharf, floating living accommodation, or any finfish net pen

For more information on the CSSP:

<https://inspection.canada.ca/food-guidance-by-commodity/fish/canadian-shellfish-sanitation-program/eng/1527251566006/1527251566942>

Detailed bivalve shellfish closure information and maps are available at our website:

<https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/shellfish-mollusques/contamination/index-eng.html>

Also available is DFO's interactive mapping program, SHELLI: <https://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/shellfish-mollusques/cssp-map-eng.htm>, which outlines sanitary and biotoxins closures and areas which are open and approved for harvest.

For safety tips for shellfish harvesting, storage, handling and cooking, selling and buying, and identification please see: <https://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/shellfish-mollusques/safe-shellfish-mollusques-secure-eng.htm>

c. Prawn

Similar to 2022, DFO approached the Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association to discuss the option of Section 10 allocating fish for financial purposes (formally referred to as use of fish) to support the activity of re-establishing Fall surveys for 2023. DFO conducts the survey in Howe Sound (research study site) in November. However, the Association did not support allocating fish for this purpose as under the policy the fish to support the activity would come from existing commercial effort. The Association did agree to conduct the surveys in the 3 high use areas with funds collected voluntarily from their members. DFO Science has confirmed that the data will be useful for management of the recreational prawn fishery. This may also help inform the future of the surveys.

Circumstances for the 2023-24 season remain the same as last year. DFO has conducted surveys in three high use areas: Saanich Inlet (19-7 to 19-12), Stuart Channel (17-5, 17-6, 17-9) and Alberni Inlet and Barkley Sound (23-1 to 23-4) as planned Industry-led surveys



were conducted in October and/or November 2023, while DFO conducted the Howe Sound survey in November 2023. The surveys resulted in pulse fishing opportunities and closures detailed in fishery notice 1270, which came out December 1, 2023, and can be found here: https://notices.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fns-sap/index-eng.cfm?pg=view_notice&DOC_ID=293747&ID=all

Recreational fishing in these areas may be pulse fishing (closed on the first two weeks of each month) or closed, with further details announced by Fishery Notice and through the online BC Sport Fishing Guide. Recreational prawn fishing would re-open in closed areas on April 1, 2024. The daily limit remains at 125 per day and all berried prawns must be released.

d. Crab and Prawn Buoys/Floats

As of April 1, 2023, standardized buoy requirements are mandatory and the use of any objects such as household plastic jugs, bottles, and pieces of styrofoam as recreational floats is prohibited. The standardization of buoy requirements for crab and prawn fishing assists with recognition of fishing gear in catch monitoring programs and helps to distinguish between crab and prawn/shrimp traps. The 2023/24 recreational Conditions of Licence specify the float requirements in detail:

- The primary float attached to crab traps must be cylindrical in shape (includes bullet shaped) and a minimum of 27 cm in length and 12 cm in diameter; an optional secondary float may be used of any shape or size other than spherical.
- The primary float attached to prawn and shrimp traps must be spherical in shape and a minimum of 27 cm in diameter; an optional secondary float may be used of any shape or size other than cylindrical.
- Floats must be made of a durable material and suitable for operation in marine waters; floats not suitable for use in marine waters are prohibited.

Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative

Launched by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on June 8, 2021, the \$647-million Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) aims to stem historic declines in key Pacific salmon stocks and rebuild these species to a sustainable level. Work is being led by the Regional Recreational Fisheries Team under the Harvest Transformation Pillar to modernize the framework for recreational fisheries management. This work aims to ensure Pacific salmon stocks are managed sustainably with modernized and flexible recreational fishery management approaches; increasing public confidence with improved information and accountability.



Modernized and Flexible Management Approaches	Improved Information	Improved Accountability
1. Electronic licensing 2. Gear Regulations 3. Conditions of licence 4. Licence fees 5. Mark-Selective Fisheries (MSF)	1. New/improved catch monitoring programs 2. Fishing Related Incidental Mortality (FRIM) studies 3. Communications 4. Data management	1. Increased service provider responsibilities 2. Enforcement

Initial engagement on Recreational Fisheries Harvest Transformation occurred with the SFAB over the Fall of 2022 and will continue into Winter 2024. The Regional Recreational Fisheries Coordinator position for the regulatory and licensing reform is currently vacant and staffing processes are underway. For more information related to catch monitoring, please contact the Recreational Catch Monitoring Coordinator for PSSl; Robert Tadey at Robert.Tadey@dfo-mpo.gc.ca. For more information related to the regulatory and licensing reform, please contact the regional manager of recreational fisheries; Greg Hornby at Greg.Hornby@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Note: More details on MSF provided in Salmon update above

a. Regulatory and Licensing Reform

Key elements of work identified for PSSl recreational fisheries regulatory and licensing modernization include:

- Review and update of the regulatory and licensing framework to increase flexibility and adaptive management tools in recreational fishery management,
- Explore increased service provider responsibilities (e.g., mandatory catch reporting) including a possible new licence category for guides, and
- Explore increased licence fees to support recreational fishery management (e.g., catch monitoring programs, build partnerships, new research); however, this project is currently on hold due to a re-organization process in Ottawa.

The SFAB-DFO Regulations Working Group met twice in early 2023 and once in November 2023 to discuss regulatory and licensing modernization work. The group was provided a preliminary list of regulatory amendment proposals for the *BC Sport Fishing Regulations (BCSFRs), 1996* (See Appendix 1). A list of regulatory proposals was developed and informed by DFO expertise and with substantial input from the SFAB Regulations WG. The proposed list has been submitted to the Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Committee (LRAC) intake process and has been assigned an analyst. Appendix 1



is a preliminary list of items that have been flagged by either the SFAB or DFO and will require further work and follow-up. Appendix 1 is not an exhaustive list and other items may be added as the review unfolds.

Due to the extent of the review, LRAC recommended that the amendments be split in three phases, according to their level of complexity and the level of engagement required. In 2023-24, the work will primarily focus on Phase 1 and further exploratory work and engagement will be undertaken for Phases 2 and 3.

Phase 1 includes items that currently exist as conditions of the BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence (BCTWSFL) and items that only require minor amendments. These regulatory amendments are mostly administrative in nature.

Phase 2 primarily focuses on the development of new schedules within the BCSFRs to provide the department greater flexibility to regulate specific fishing gear with the goal of minimizing impacts on stocks of concern while providing recreational fishing opportunities. The preliminary list of proposed fishing gears/equipment will likely be expanded as further consultations take place.

Phase 3 focuses on the development of a new guide licence category and requires further analysis.

The Department is also working on making some improvements to the DFO online Sport Fishing Guide, including developing an interactive recreational map to improve communication of regulatory requirements. The mapping function is expected to be completed in early 2024, prior to the next licence year.

b. Catch Monitoring and Reporting

The SFAB-DFO Catch Monitoring Working Group met twice in early 2023, to review and update a workplan that was initially developed in 2021 that identifies key areas of interest on recreational catch monitoring and reporting and to discuss work that is planned under the PSSI. Priority items that have been discussed and will continue to be discussed in future working group meetings include:

- Catch monitoring for Mark-selective Fisheries (MSF)
- Coast-wide recreational monitoring standards
- Exploration of a licence-based monitoring regime
- Review Yelloweye and Quillback iREC estimates
- Exploration of mandatory reporting requirements for guides/lodges
- Improved communications/public education

As outlined in the Chinook Conservation section above, in Spring of 2023, the Department approved additional MSF opportunities in Victoria and Saanich-Gulf Islands areas, along with MSFs that were approved in previous years. The Department worked with the recreational sector on enhanced monitoring in the form of a reference fishery



to better understand mark rates, stock composition, and catch rates. This included independent at-sea monitoring verification of releases and biological sampling. Results will be shared with the SFAB in the post-season.

The Department has also started development of a creel survey information video that is intended for public information on how the creel survey is used to monitor the recreational fishery. This product is expected to be completed by the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The Department is also hosting a Recreational Catch Monitoring Workshop in January 2024. Its purpose is to share innovations being tested and implemented in recreational catch monitoring programs in the Pacific Region. Program managers receive feedback and advice on their innovations and consider adopting innovations for their own programs.

The SFAB Catch Monitoring Working Group met in September 2023 and anticipated to meet again in February 2024.

Salmon Allocation Policy Review

In 2018, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans committed to renew the Salmon Allocation Policy in collaboration with First Nations and stakeholders.

During Phase I of the review process in British Columbia, DFO worked with First Nations and the Recreational and Commercial sectors to develop the Terms of Reference to guide the review. We appreciate the time and effort that the Sport Fishing Advisory Board put into providing feedback on the draft Terms of Reference during consultations in 2020 and 2021. The final Terms of Reference for the Salmon Allocation Policy review in BC were approved by former Minister Murray and were shared with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board and other key participants in September 2022.

Throughout fall 2022, DFO worked to secure the services of an independent facilitator to guide discussions, and worked with all parties on their identification of participants for the Multi-Party Working Group.

On June 13, 2023, DFO hosted the first meeting of the Multi-Party Working Group, which was attended by four representatives of the SFAB, along with participants from the Commercial Salmon Advisory Board, First Nations and the Province (as an observer). DFO is now working with all parties to identify future dates for Multi-Party Working Group meetings. We anticipate the focus of Multi-Party Working Group discussions this fall will be on the identification of issues and analysis to inform the development of policy options.



A separate process to develop recommendations for a Yukon Salmon Allocation Policy is also underway.

Questions about the review can also be directed to DFO.SAPReviewBC-PASRevueBC.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Marine Protected Areas

a. Northern Shelf Bioregion

Public engagement and Crown-Indigenous Consultation on the Network Action Plan (NAP) for the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network occurred between September 6 and November 25, 2022. Following this period of engagement and consultation, the Network Partners endorsed the NAP at the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5). This endorsement included a joint public announcement on February 5, 2023, with representatives from the First Nation, provincial, and federal partners.

- Indigenous groups, fishers and harvesters, stakeholders, environmental non-government organizations, and the public were invited to provide input on a draft Network Action Plan to guide implementation of a network of marine protected areas in the Northern Shelf Bioregion from North Vancouver Island to the Alaska border. This feedback during public engagement followed multiple years of significant stakeholder and First Nation engagement.
- The action plan summarizes the approach used to develop a design for the MPA Network and provides recommendations for how it will be implemented, governed, and managed. This work is the result of many years of collaboration between First Nations, the Province of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada.
- MPA Network website: <https://mpanetwork.ca/>.
- The MPA Network process is now in the regulatory phase, which includes extensive feasibility assessments, site-level consultation and engagement, and technical analysis.
- The Network initiative is one of four that is part of the Project for Finance Permanence (PFP). PFP included \$800 million over seven years to support the Indigenous-led conservation initiatives.

The Department supports and is committed to the NSB MPA network process and is actively working through details around implementation at the site level, in support of the Government of Canada's commitments to protect 25 per cent of Canadian marine waters by 2025, and 30 per cent by 2030. More engagement will occur at the site level through site-based advisory committees, fishery advisory boards, and bilateral meetings. As information is made available, it will be shared internally and externally.



Two sites have been implemented to date as part of the NSB MPA Network which have implications for recreational fisheries.

- Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala (Lull/Hoeya) Marine Refuge: [Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala \(Lull/Hoeya\) marine refuge \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/lull/Hoeya_marine_refuge)
 - Specific details of the closures and restrictions on a site-by-site basis can be found in Fisheries Notices FN 0118 (2023).
 - The Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala (Lull/Hoeya) Marine Refuge is closed to all recreational fishing.
- Lophelia Reef
 - Specific details of the closures and restrictions can be found in Fisheries Notices FN ##### 2024 [to be published February 2024].
 - Lophelia Reef is closed to all recreational fishing except salmon trolling.

b. Glass Sponge Reefs

There is no upcoming public engagement planned for the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Initiative.

Consultation on the proposed alignment of existing Glass Sponge Reefs and Rockfish Conservation Areas (GSR-RCA Project) and review of Rockfish Conservation Areas in Howe Sound, Indian Arm, and Jervis Inlet are anticipated for Spring 2024.

- There are currently 11 rockfish conservation areas, 10 glass sponge reef marine refuges, and five proposed glass sponge reef marine refuges in Howe sound, and there are another eight rockfish conservation areas in Jervis Inlet and three in Indian Arm. Management measures between the glass sponge reefs and rockfish conservation areas are different and many overlap within Howe Sound. Through the GSR-RCA Project, DFO is exploring options to review the effectiveness of rockfish conservation areas and avenues to improve them where needed, as well as reviewing the potential to adjust the geographic boundaries and management measures of glass sponge reefs and rockfish conservation areas where they overlap in Howe Sound to help increase their effectiveness, increase compliance and enforcement, and reduce public confusion on the water. Looking at glass sponge reefs and rockfish conservation areas together can help strengthen conservation and make the process more efficient.
- Following a period of engagement on DFO's original proposal for the GSR-RCA Project, DFO has incorporated feedback and information into a second proposal that proposed to establish new marine refuges, adjust the geographic boundaries and management measures to some rockfish conservation areas to increase their effectiveness and better protect rockfish, and rescind some rockfish conservation areas that are not currently effective. These changes will help support meeting the Government of Canada's commitment to the Marine Conservation Targets goal of protecting 25 per cent of Canadian marine waters by 2025.



- The Department is planning to consult beginning this spring with First Nation communities, commercial and recreational harvesters, ENGOs, and other stakeholders on the proposed boundary changes and management measures to rockfish conservation areas and glass sponge reefs in Howe Sound, Indian Arm and Jervis Inlet.

SFAB Reconciliation Committees

The Sport Fishing Advisory Board Reconciliation Committee (SFAB RC) was initiated in 2021 to further the process of reconciliation between First Nation communities, the SFAB community, and DFO. The Committee is formed in acknowledgement of the role the recreational community plays in reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities and as integral to the reconciliation process. The purpose of the SFAB RC is to support SFAB members in understanding the impact of past decisions on Indigenous communities and the importance of moving on a new path towards reconciliation.

The SFAB RC meets on a quarterly basis per year to discuss topics such as status of treaty and reconciliation agreement negotiations and implementation, information on the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Action Plan, developing protocols to encourage development of collaborative tables with regions, monitoring and catch reporting requirements for Indigenous and recreational fisheries, and other topics of mutual interest. The group is also pursuing participation from other partners such as provincial counterparts and guests speakers.

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SFAB Process Review

a. Prior Modernization Project Work

SFAB modernization began with the approval of the 2019 BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) application and stakeholder workshops in January of 2020. Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) was retained to design a framework to investigate gaps and opportunities to design a modernized Operating Model (OM) to achieve efficiencies while also enhancing stakeholder engagement. The design framework hosted a workshop in 2020, with a cross section of a broad representative group of stakeholders. The initial OM design engagement reviewed the present state of the SFAB Operating Model (OM), identified potential improvements for stakeholder engagement, and initiated work on drafting a modernized OM. After considerable review with the SFAB and DFO, a revised Operating Model (OM) was endorsed in April 2022. The new



OM is designed to focus SFAB operations around key species DFO manages and to better align meeting schedules to management decision and seasonal timelines. The new OM is intended to facilitate improved knowledge sharing for SFAB participants, enhanced engagement, and succession into SFAB roles.

Modifications of the SFAB OM are as follows:

- Consolidation of Regional North & South Coast meetings into 2 SFAB Main Board Conferences (Winter & Spring) where all local SFAC Chairs, Executive, Species Chairs will meet, share knowledge, and engage.
- Four Species/Management Committees will receive local SFAC motions/input for review. SFAB motions will be more efficient and related to a species or specific topic before they advance to the SFAB Main Board Conference. Where possible, DFO technical species experts will participate within Species Committees to help inform SFAB motion development, enhancing advice SFAB Species Committees advance to the SFAB Conference Board for consideration.
 - Committees are:
 - Salmon Committee
 - Pelagic & Invertebrate Committee
 - Groundfish Committee
 - Policy & Management Committee
- Creating improved alignment earlier in the advisory cycle. The SFAB and DFO will exchange issues and concerns in the Fall, sharing those with local SFAC and Species Committees to focus effort more efficiently. DFO will provide Requests for Advice (RFA), and the SFAB will provide Requests for Consideration (RFC) to DFO.

b. SFAB Support

The modernization project will identify administrative and technical support requirements necessary to help enhance stakeholder engagement and design the tools and support participants require to be more effective in their roles within the SFAB process. The work plan also includes identifying best practices to guide more effective meetings, and develop standards for meeting Chairs and participants to follow. Work will include developing meeting and a motion guidebook to help transition the SFAB towards practicing new standards that achieve a common experience across the entire SFAB.

c. Next Steps for Project

The SFAB modernization project is progressing to the final phase, completion of the new and modernized OM design, scheduled for completion by March 31, 2024. This final phase will identify supporting process standards, a revised Terms of Reference, and definition of administrative and technology support requirements. A small team of SFAB and DFO stakeholders have been participating in workshops to complete a revised Terms of Reference (ToR) and new Species Committee Process Standards (PS) that define how each new Committee will function. This revision and development work is



scheduled to be completed by December 2023 Conference Board . The new OM, ToR, and PS will be shared at the December Conference Board and at information sessions for SFAC participants in Fall 2023. Feedback received from the SFAB will be incorporated into the final ToR and PS. The final ToR will be ratified in a vote at the Spring SFAB Conference Board Meeting. The updated ToR will require DFO approval.

d. 2023 and Beyond

Work will begin to implement the new SFAB Operating Model and on-board Admin staff to help support the new SFAB model from April 2024. PWC will develop a framework for gathering SFAB stakeholder observations regarding gaps and opportunities to design further updates and continuous improvements to the new SFAB Operating Model, ToR and Process Standards following implementation. The intention is for PWC to observe a sampling of SFAB meetings (SFAC, Species Committees) to capture continuous improvements and help lead development of updates in the first year following implementation of the new OM. Simple and easy to implement improvements identified will be shared with the SFAB Executive and DFO for consideration to be put into place ahead of the Spring Conference Board meeting.

As a component of SFAB modernization, there is active investigation regarding a new reliable funding model to ensure the modernized SFAB process has the financial, administrative and technology support necessary. It is important to note that the initial modernized SFAB Operating Model is designed to be implemented in a cost/budget neutral manner until alternative funding for the full implementation of a modernized SFAB can be realized.

For more information please contact:

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App Integration

a. The Beginning – FRIS 2017

The Department is continuing to evolve its collaborative partnerships with mobile application service providers, in relation to sharing data electronically between mobile apps and DFO systems. This application integration development work started with DFO's Fishery Regulations Information System (FRIS), initiated in 2015, and launched in 2017, with providing tidal water recreational fishing regulations information (sourced from FRIS) to fishers out on the water via apps on their mobile devices, initially to the Sport Fishing Institute's (SFI) 'FishingBC App', and more recently to the 'MyCatch App' as created by Angler's Atlas. As a side note, this important FRIS development work is ongoing with the planned launch of FRIS 2.1 now in 2024, which will see the automatic



derivation of recreational fishery regulations information (posted to the online Sport Fishing Guide) directly from Variation Order contents.

b. Launched! – Electronic Licensing and Catch Recording 2023

The current iteration in this application integration work has now expended into electronic licensing and catch recording for the 2023-24 licence year (launched in December 2023 – see the Sport Fishing Guide for more details), with data shared by fishers on a voluntary basis between their National Recreational Licensing System (NRLS) account and their FishingBC App account. This data will include (i) a pdf copy of the fisher's licence document, and (ii) their catch records for lingcod (in specified areas with annual catch limits), halibut and chinook salmon, which data will be synchronized between the fisher's FishingBC App and NRLS accounts for a specific licence, and with catch data allowed to be recorded by the fisher in either account (as it will be synchronized with the other account).

Fishers are already allowed to hold a licence pdf on a mobile device as proof of purchase at time of inspection by a fishery officer/guardian. This improvement now allows fishers to record their catch (lingcod, halibut and chinook) in the FishingBC App catch log, and to also have that data displayed on their licence pdf (in the App) during an inspection by Fishery Officers, which will then be fully compliant with the catch recording requirements in the *BC Sport Fishing Regulations*. The electronic licence pdf as held in the FishingBC App – with catch recording – will thus be directly and legally equivalent to a paper licence.

This is an exciting achievement that now sees DFO, in association with the SFI's FishingBC App, achieving full electronic licensing and catch recording in the recreational fishery for the Pacific region, such that a paper licence is no longer required for a fisher choosing to use the FishingBC App to present both their licence and share their catch details. Note that fishers will still have the option of using a paper licence if they so choose.

Southern Resident Killer Whale Management Measures

Since 2018, the Government of Canada, with input from the Southern Resident Killer Whale Multi-Nation Group, Indigenous and Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group, and Technical Working Groups and consultation with Indigenous groups, stakeholders, and the public, has implemented a number of measures aimed at increasing prey availability for Southern Resident Killer Whales – particularly Chinook Salmon – and reducing physical and acoustic disturbance by focusing on protecting key foraging areas within Southern Resident Killer Whale critical habitat. These measures include fishing closures, Interim Sanctuary Zones (i.e. no go zones), vessel Speed Restricted Zones, increased vessel avoidance distances, and several voluntary measures in the presence of killer whales, including asking fishers to stop fishing within 1000m of killer whales.



For the 2024 and 2025 fishing seasons, the Department is consulting with Indigenous groups, stakeholders, and the public to inform potential changes for 2024 and 2025 to support the population's recovery. The Department intends for actions for the 2024 and 2025 seasons be implemented to coincide with the return of Southern Resident Killer Whales in typically greater numbers to Canadian Pacific waters.

For more information regarding the Southern Resident Killer Whale management measures, please visit: <https://www.canada.ca/southern-resident-killer-whales> and for any questions please contact the DFO Marine Mammal Team via email DFO.SRKW-ERS.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.



Appendix 1: Regulatory Amendment Proposals for the *BC Sport Fishing Regulations, 1996*

PHASE 1

Section Hyperlink	Change	From	To
Section 22	Add halibut recording requirement from the conditions of licence (COLs) to regulations.	Currently, the recording obligation for halibut is dealt with in COL.	A licence holder who catches and retains a <u>halibut</u> , lingcod, or a chinook salmon shall immediately record the catch on the licence or, if a record can be made in a catch registry kept by DFO, in that registry.
Section 29	Move halibut size/quota, head off/on lengths requirements from COLs to regulations.	No person shall catch and retain in any subarea (a) a white sturgeon that measures less than 100 cm or more than 150 cm in overall length; (b) a wild trout that measures less than 30 cm in overall length; (c) a hatchery trout that measures less than 30 cm in overall length; or (d) a lingcod that measures less than 65 cm in overall length or that measures, with the head off, less than 53 cm in length when measured along the shortest length of the body to the tip of the tail.	Add halibut size to Section 29 of the regulations.
Section 37	Move from COL to regulations: “No person shall retain a Manila Clam or Littleneck Clam smaller than 35 mm, nor a Butter Clam smaller than 55 mm.”	No size limits for clams in Section 37 of regulations.	Add to regulations.



Section 48	Move salmon head off/on lengths from COL to regulations (Chinook and Coho).	No person shall catch and retain a salmon of a species set out in column I of Schedule VI, in any subarea, lake, or stream, the overall length of which is less than the minimum overall length set out in column II.	Add head off lengths to Schedule VI for Chinook and Coho. Consider head off lengths for other species.
Part II	New section to move COL to regulations: “Anglers in vessels shall immediately return all rockfish that are not being retained to the water and to a similar depth from which they were caught by use of an inverted weighted barbless hook or other purpose-built descender device.”	Currently in COL.	Add to Part II (Fishing for Finfish Other than Salmon in Tidal Waters).
Part III	New section to move COL to regulations: “No person shall retain prawn carrying eggs or remove eggs from the underside of prawn carrying eggs. All prawns carrying eggs externally on the underside of the tail shall be returned to the water immediately and in the manner that causes the least harm.”	Currently in COL.	Add to Part III (Fishing for Crustaceans, Echinoderms, Molluscs, and Shellfish in Tidal Waters).
Interpretation	Revise definition for natural bait to include advancements in technology and fishing tackle (i.e. synthetic products)	Natural bait means any foodstuff or natural substance other than wood, cotton, wool, hair, fur or feathers. It does not include fin fish other than roe.	Amend definition to include synthetic baits. Proposed Definition: “Bait” is any product that can be consumed by a fish including roe, any other fish or part of a fish, crustacean or shellfish; any aquatic or terrestrial invertebrate or insect; any organism that is alive or was once alive; any food



			or food product; any dough or paste, or any substance, either natural or artificially produced, that may produce scent that is part of the terminal tackle or is applied to the terminal tackle. Bait does not include any lure made of metal, wood, plastic or any synthetic that does not produce a scent or any lure made of feathers, or from the fur, hair or hide of any animal.
Interpretation	Revised the definition of artificial fly to include advancements in current fly materials.	2 (1) artificial fly means (a) in non-tidal waters, a single-pointed hook that is dressed only with fur, feathers, hair, textiles, tinsel, wire or any combination of those materials and to which no external weight or external attracting device is attached; and (b) in tidal waters, a hook, or two hooks tied in tandem, dressed only with fur, feathers, hair, textiles, tinsel, wire or any combination of those materials.	The requested definition is: Artificial Fly means any fly constructed by the method of fly tying where the construction materials are affixed to a single pointed hook by means of thread or adhesive.
Schedules	Add a new 'named species' to one of the Schedules in the BCSFRs to include Boccaccio and Opal squid, Humbolt Squid.	Species not listed in BCSFR schedules.	List species to close the regulatory gap.



PHASE 2

Section Hyperlink	Change	From	To
Section 6	Include number of rods and/or lines in new gear schedules (salmon and fin fish other than salmon) to be able to vary in-season.	(1) Subject to subsection (2), no person shall angle with more than one fishing line (a) in any lake or stream; or (b) for white sturgeon	Include number of rods/lines in a new gear schedule.
Section 7	Move weights into gear schedule to be able to vary and repeal in Section 7.	No person shall angle with a fishing line to which is attached a weight that is greater than one kilogram.	Include weight options in new gear schedule.
Section 8 (1)	Revise to allow the ability to use more than one hook on specific freshwater bodies within the province.	8 (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), no person shall angle with a fishing line to which more than one hook, artificial lure or artificial fly is attached	Edit so that fishers can use two hooks year round in freshwater bodies, but vary it to one for specific water bodies. Could be included in the new gear schedule.
Section 8 (3)	Revise to include a single piece of bait and/or lure.	(3) Subject to subsection (4), a person may angle in tidal waters with any number of hooks attached to a fishing line if the hooks are used in combination to hold a single piece of bait	(3) Subject to subsection (4), a person may angle in tidal waters with any number of hooks attached to a fishing line if the hooks are used in combination to hold a single piece of bait and/or lure.
Section 49	Update table "Close Times for Salmon Angling by Method, Gear and Bait" to remove specific reg and put into a schedule for more flexibility.	49 No person shall fish for salmon by a method or with a type of gear or bait set out in column I of an item of the table to this section in any Subarea, lake or stream during the close time set out in column II of that item. (Current Close Times for Salmon Angling by Method, Gear and Bait outlined in a table in the body of the regs)	Move table in Section 49 to a schedule and expand to include more gear types, etc. Similar to what existing in Schedule IV for Fin- fish other than salmon



New Sections	Develop a gear schedule with gear types that support management flexibility and move items managed in COLs into regulations: for example barbless hooks, downriggers, lure types, leader lengths, etc.	COLs	Move to Regulations, likely most appropriate in a new gear Schedule linked to Section 49 of the Regs.
Schedule IV, V and Section 63 (Table)	Potential updates to the schedules and table in regard to Gears, Methods and Baits	Schedule IV, V and Section 63 (Table)	Amended schedules IV, V and section 63 (table) to support variation of gear types Potential updates in related sections in Part II, III, and V
Section 22	Revise to support needs for recording through the APP or electronically. Review text in section 22 and revise to provide clarity. Allow flexibility through third-party data systems.	22 A licence holder who catches and retains a lingcod or a chinook salmon shall immediately record the catch on the licence or, if a record can be made in a catch registry kept by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in that registry.	Revise to support recording through the BC Fishing APP. Review text in section 22 and revise to provide clarity. Allow flexibility through third-party data systems and API linkages.
Section 22	Update catch monitoring requirements to be more generalized as “shall complete all information requested on the licence for each retained fish...”.	Same as above	Revise to have more flexible language in the regulations to allow for applications to other species as identified on the licence. Suggestion that section 22 be generalized such as “shall complete all information requested on the licence for each retained fish...”.
Interpretation	Add the definition of a “Resident” and “Non-Resident.”	Currently no definition. Section 17 note: For the purposes of this table, resident means a person who normally resides in Canada.	Add definition
Interpretation	Add definition for a leader line	Currently no definition	Add definition



Interpretation	Add definition for a landing net and dip net.	Currently no definition	Add definition
Interpretation	Add a definition for a downrigger and quick release, possibly need to define other gear types as well.	Currently no definition	Add definition
Section 6 (2)	Revise to allow the Province of BC the ability to vary specific water bodies, to permit the use of more than one fishing line while angling.	(2) A person who is alone in a boat may angle with two fishing lines in a lake.	Include number of rods in the new gear schedule to allow DFO or BC to vary.



PHASE 3

Section Hyperlink	Changes	From	To
Interpretation	Add the definition of “Guides” if the new licence category is created. DFO is exploring the concept of a guide licence with mandated catch recording and reporting requirement.	Currently no definition	Add definition
Section 17	Add new licence category for guides.	No category in regulations	Add category to regulations
Schedules	Amend close times to reflect seasonal closures that have been rolled over. (Administrative change with no impact fishery)	N/A	N/A