

# Press Release

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## Understanding sustainability ratings in BC Seafood

The Seafood Watch program at the Monterey Bay Aquarium recently released its updated rankings of BC coho and chinook fishery sustainability. The BC Salmon Marketing Council was alarmed by these new sustainability rankings which are misleading at best and do not represent the reality of our fisheries.

In particular, the rating of chinook and coho on both the west coast of Vancouver Island and the south coast areas appears to be based on a misunderstanding of management measures and the nature of these two fisheries.

Dane Chauvel, Chair of the BCSMC noted that *"the announcement did not advance the cause of sustainability; it did not engender support from industry and factually, it was a clear miss. If our shared goal is real sustainability and consumer confidence, we need to work together and ensure that the decisions make sense from a fisheries perspective and that industry is not blind-sided without time to adjust. With the stroke of a pen and without any consultation this decision has cost BC fishermen, First Nations and coastal communities thousands of dollars."*

Mr. Chauvel goes on to say, *"It is difficult to understand how the North Coast of B.C. chinook fishery was ranked a good alternative while the neighboring Southeast Alaska chinook fishery is represented as a best choice."* While the two fisheries harvest essentially the same stocks, the B.C. fishery is subject to catch share management and DNA-based stock analysis to ensure the total catch and that of the component stocks are maintained within the sustainable allocation levels established under the Pacific Salmon Treaty. *"In effect, you have made the product of a more sustainable fishery less marketable and less valuable."*

The South Coast B.C. seine and gillnet fisheries either do not target chinook and coho and are required to release all such bycatch, or are directed at terminal fisheries of hatchery produced salmon which are conducted nowhere near the migration path of the stocks of concern.

The BC Commercial Salmon fishery has been proactive in the development and implementation of sustainability practices. For example, the South Coast commercial and First Nations economic opportunity troll fisheries are required to use species-specific lures, are subject to area closures, and are timed to avoid species and stocks of concern. In all cases, the fishermen are complying with the constraints that have been implemented to achieve independent third-party sustainability ratings. In addition, the B.C. commercial fishing industry is working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to assess the monitoring and compliance practices and behaviour of fisheries by all sectors (commercial, recreational and First Nations) to ensure a holistic approach is being taken towards management of the resource.

The public is being bombarded with articles about wild salmon dire in their tone and content. Through all of this, important parts of the sustainability picture are overlooked.

Mr. Chauvel added, *"We want consumers to know that no one cares more deeply about the sustainability of BC Wild Salmon. Rankings as they are presented from time to time may not reflect the entirety of the sustainability story."*

The BC Salmon Marketing Council will continue to work with our partners to communicate a comprehensive understanding of the BC Wild Salmon fishery and inspire consumer confidence.

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