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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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### BCAFN REGIONAL CHIEF TEEGEE ENCOURAGED BY PACIFIC SALMON COMMERCIAL CLOSURES, STRESSES CROWN OBLIGATION TO ENGAGE WITH FIRST NATIONS

*(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – June 30, 2021)* – On June 29, 2021, the Honourable Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans (DFO) and the Canadian Coast Guard, announced an initial step towards longer-term reductions in fishing pressure on stocks of conservation concern with significant commercial salmon closures for the 2021 season. Nearly 60 percent of commercial salmon fisheries will be closed for the 2021 season and a voluntary license retirement program is being made available.

BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) welcomes the announcement and is encouraged by this significant decision to slow the collapse of wild Pacific salmon stocks. Salmon is critical for First Nations in BC, for their spiritual, cultural and ceremonial uses; it's just not about economics. First Nations will need to be fully engaged and consulted to best implement this decision with as little impact as possible to their priority rights to access fish resources. Communal-commercial fishing licenses will need to continue to operate for First Nations who hold them; First Nations experience the worst economic conditions of any group in the country, and this must be taken into account during engagement. With the recent passing of the federal legislation, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2021*, it requires that the federal government, the DFO in particular, take a different approach in decision-making for fisheries management – First Nations have rights that include decision-making.

"I am encouraged by the leadership of Minister Jordan on this recent decision to close part of the commercial salmon season. DFO must engage with First Nation right holders to further discuss the impacts to First Nations fishers – this includes getting their free, prior, and informed consent. Pressure on non-salmon species is bound to arise. First Nations must be involved in the monitoring and management of these other species to ensure that they are sustained for as long as possible. Prior to contact, we sustained all wildlife populations, including marine species for millennia." stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee, "We cannot put ourselves into a position where we are replacing one problem with another."

Regional Chief further said, "First Nations have inherent, constitutional, and Supreme Court affirmed harvesting rights to fish that supersede all other management decisions, except in the case of conservation. As industry begins to focus on non-salmon species, First Nations must receive priority access to fisheries resources." He added, "First Nations have been blowing the whistle on declining salmon stocks and have been ignored for decades. We must do everything possible to prevent the collapse of our wild pacific salmon."

Read Canada's announcement here for more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans/news/2021/06/minister-jordan-announces-long-term-commercial-closures-and-licence-tetirement-program-in-effort-to-save-pacific-salmon.html>

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