



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Alistair MacGregor

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT - COWICHAN-MALAHAT-LANGFORD

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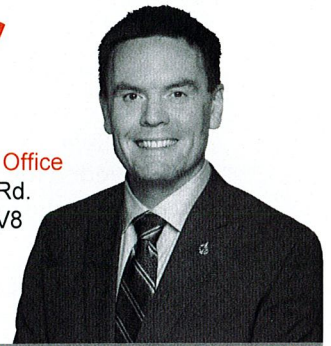
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November 20, 2018

DELIVERED BY HAND

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

I am writing to again bring your department's attention to the issue of the Cowichan Lake Weir in my riding of Cowichan-Malahat-Langford and its fundamental importance to the long-term health of the Cowichan River and its fish and fish habitat.

On October 2, 2018, I participated in a conference call with the Honourable Doug Donaldson, BC's Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and the Honourable Minister George Heyman, BC's Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. Also participating in this call was Cowichan Valley MLA Sonia Furstenau and members of the Cowichan Watershed Board, including Cowichan Tribes Chief William Seymour. There is strong agreement among all interested parties that the long-term health of the Cowichan River will depend on a significant infrastructure upgrade and raising of the Cowichan Weir to store more water.

As I wrote previously to your predecessor, over the past number of years, due to unprecedented dry springs and summers with no rain and snow pack, the water flows in the Cowichan River have reached such low levels that they are having detrimental effects for fish, which include trout, young Steelhead, fry Coho and adult Chinook salmon. Future modelling based on climate change realities show this is a trend that will continue.

The Government of Canada has previously acknowledged that summer low flows in the Cowichan River are a threat to fish and fish habitat and raising the Cowichan Weir could provide additional water storage in Cowichan Lake to provide sufficient flows to support fish and fish habitat in the Cowichan River during the dry period of the year.

I note that on October 31, 2018 your department announced \$61.5 million in funding to implement new measures aimed at protecting Southern Resident Killer Whales. The announcement also references "important measures aimed at protecting and recovering Chinook salmon stocks that are significant for the Southern Resident Killer Whales." As the Cowichan River is an important spawning habitat and part

of the regular migratory path for Chinook salmon, these ecosystems are directly connected. Without directly needed investments in the Cowichan Weir to manage water levels in the Cowichan River during dry periods, the inevitable result will be that the Chinook salmon species will vanish as a food source.

A future meeting with Minister Donaldson and Minister Heyman has been scheduled in the very near future to discuss how the Cowichan Lake weir project will go forward. I am writing to ask that the Government of Canada abide by its responsibility to fish and fish habitat and its commitments to climate change mitigation by providing direct funding for raising the Cowichan River Weir to ensure sustainable water flow that is sufficient to protect fish and fish habitat and to sustain the cultural, ecological, municipal and industrial requirements of affected communities.

Your earliest response as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Alistair MacGregor, MP
Cowichan-Malahat-Langford

Cc: Constituents

AM