



## Cowichan Tribes

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January 16 2019

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson  
Minister, Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
200 Kent St Station 15N100  
Ottawa ON K1A 0E6

### **RE: Meeting Summary for December 20<sup>th</sup> 2018, Cowichan Valley**

Dear Honourable Minister Wilkinson:

Huy tseep q'u to you and your staff for travelling to Cowichan to meet with us during the extreme weather of December 20<sup>th</sup>. We appreciate your dedication and respect to follow through with your visit and we hope you found it a productive conversation.

To ensure we are all on the same page moving forward, here is a summary of the points discussed and next steps. We welcome any corrections.

#### **Participants**

- Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
- Chief William Seymour (f, Cowichan Tribes, Cowichan Watershed Board Co-Chair)
- Chair Ian Morrison (CVRD Chair, Cowichan Watershed Board Co-Chair)
- Cheri Ayers (consultant to Cowichan Tribes)
- Eamon Gaunt (Cowichan Tribes)
- Tim Kulchyski (Cowichan Tribes, Cowichan Watershed Board)
- Fiona Simons (Pacific Desk, Minister's Office)
- Thi Tran (Issues Manager, Minister's Office)
- Adam Silverstein (Regional Manager, Community Involvement and Resource Restoration, DFO)
- Kevin Pellett (DFO Nanaimo)
- Chantal Nessman (DFO Nanaimo)
- Jill Thompson (Cowichan Watershed Board)

#### **Discussion and Next Steps:**

1) Cowichan Tribes' staff provided a summary of progress on the Coastal Restoration Fund project, "Protecting and Restoring Canada's Wild River Heritage as an Integral Link to the Salish Sea; Integrating Coastal Restoration Fund Project with our Watershed Approach." This project is going very well and making a lasting impact for our region thanks to all the successful partnerships. A written brief was provided.

2) Cowichan Tribes and Cowichan Watershed Board representatives discussed the critical need to increase water storage in Lake Cowichan by replacing the weir. Without sufficient water storage, all the work done to

restore habitats, and the future survival success of Chinook, Steelhead, and other fish species, is at risk. There are also other impacts to the local economy and Cowichan indigenous rights from low water levels. A written brief was provided.

- A request was made for senior government to provide the capital funding for the weir replacement project, currently estimated at approximately \$15 million.
- The Minister committed to take this request away to consider, and referenced potential opportunities through the Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund and Green Infrastructure Fund.
- The Minister also inquired about whether the province and Catalyst are willing partners, and asked Cowichan Tribes to provide confirmation from the Provincial Ministers about whether they support partnering with the Federal government to align this funding.

3) Cowichan Tribes brought forward a request for support from the Minister to streamline the process for annual authorizations to remove gravel from the North Arm. This section of river now infills every year and needs to be excavated for fish passage due to low water flows. Cowichan Tribes requested support for a five year program with a streamlined approval process. The gravel issues are tied to disagreements between the managing partners over flow reductions below the minimal 7m<sup>3</sup>/s required in the water license. Chief Seymour and Chair Morrison both spoke of the reality that Cowichan people continue to take the brunt of these issues when their fishery is closed down. Chief Seymour spoke of the need for better cooperation from DFO to maintain adequate flows.

- The Minister committed to discuss this request with the Department and respond to Cowichan Tribes' request.

In closing, the Coastal Restoration Fund projects are helping to restore elements of the hugely productive Cowichan River ecosystem. Cowichan Tribes thanks you for your Ministry's support in this. We hope you will expand on this success to partner in the larger water supply solution that is essential to long-term fish health, including Chinook salmon and associated Southern Resident Killer Whales, and to streamline the process for annual gravel removal in the meantime to enable fish migration during times of below-minimum lows.

Sincerely,



Chief William Seymour  
Cowichan Tribes

Copied via email:

MP Alistair MacGregor  
MLA Sonia Furstenu  
Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia  
Honourable Minister Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations  
Honourable Minister George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Honourable Minister Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
All Cowichan Watershed Board members  
All meeting participants