

# **What We Heard: Report on Consultation and Response**

**from the Fall 2017 *Draft Initial Wild Salmon Policy Implementation Plan* Meetings**



Fisheries and Oceans Canada | Pacific Region  
2018–2022 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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## Executive Summary

Wild Pacific salmon are iconic species that hold cultural, social, and economic significance for people across BC and Yukon, and in 2005, *Canada's Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon* (Wild Salmon Policy or WSP) was released after five years of consultation. The goal of this policy is “to restore and maintain healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Canada in perpetuity” (WSP, 2005).

Meeting this goal is an everyday action that will never be complete. However, there are still milestones that can be met year to year. To accomplish these milestones, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) developed the *Wild Salmon Policy 2018-2022 Implementation Plan* (the Plan) that sets out activities to be undertaken over the next five years to support the goal of the WSP.

The document was produced in consultation with First Nations, stakeholders and the public. DFO hosted 32 consultation sessions on the draft Plan in 12 communities across British Columbia and Yukon, in addition to WebExes and opportunities for online submissions. The feedback so generously shared with DFO was incredibly valuable and informed the final Plan.

Consultations on the draft Plan were a touchstone for a wide range of issues and provided an opportunity for First Nations, stakeholders and members of the public to share their views and perspectives regarding salmon, salmon habitat and associated ecosystems. The engagement witnessed throughout consultations on the Plan highlighted a community that is deeply connected to the conservation of wild Pacific salmon, and to fish and fish habitat more broadly. While some contributions were outside the scope of the Wild Salmon Policy, all comments were considered and feedback was tracked and shared with DFO programs.

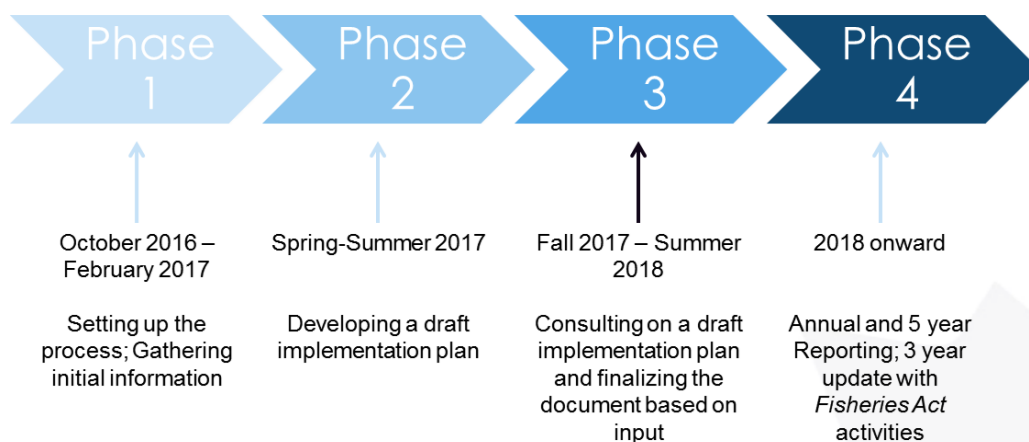
This *What We Heard: Consultation Report* summarizes the perspectives, experiences and information that were shared through the fall 2017 consultations process, and explains where information in the final Plan can be found. The report begins with overarching comments and observations from the consultations, and is then organized into the Plan's three key themes: Assessment; Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks (formerly Integrated Planning and Program Delivery); and Accountability.

## Background

This report focuses on the third phase of consultations, but consultations have spanned the entirety of the development of the Plan. From the beginning, DFO recognized the vital role that First Nations, partners, and stakeholders have in meeting WSP objectives, and so in the first phase of the project, between fall 2016 and spring 2017, the Department met with representatives of more than 150 First Nations groups and stakeholder organizations, as well as members of the general public across BC and Yukon. The purpose of these initial consultation sessions (Phase 1) was to provide background on the Wild Salmon Policy and to discuss a proposed approach to developing an implementation plan. A summary of the common themes and recommendations that were shared with DFO by participants in this first round of consultations is captured in a 2016 What We Heard document that is available upon request from the WSP Inbox.

Over spring and summer 2017 (Phase 2), DFO worked with key partners to gather ideas and advice in developing the initial draft Plan. Key partners included the BC First Nations Salmon Coordinating Committee under the First Nations Fisheries Council, the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (a joint Government of Canada, Government of Yukon, and Council of Yukon First Nations committee) under the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Board, the Province of BC, and the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

In October and November 2017 (Phase 3), DFO consulted with First Nations, stakeholders and other interested parties across BC and Yukon on the initial draft Plan. These consultations marked an important opportunity to engage broadly on the preliminary draft document, with extensive input gathered over 32 consultations sessions, hundreds of written submissions and ongoing work with key partners. This *What We Heard: Consultation Report* summarizes the feedback received during Phase 3 and includes information on how DFO has considered and integrated feedback into the recently released *WSP 2018-2022 Implementation Plan* (Phase 4).



## Overarching Comments about the Draft WSP Implementation Plan

### General Comments

Many groups expressed their appreciation for DFO's collaborative approach and the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Plan, and much of the feedback focused on requests for clearer objectives, more measurable outcomes, and realistic deliverables, including following the recommendations of the Cohen Commission around developing an implementation plan. This information was taken into account, and the Activities Tables found in the document are now clearer.

### *First Nations input*

In general, many First Nations groups were appreciative of the consultation sessions held in multiple communities, and highlighted their interest in ensuring DFO engage in meaningful and respectful consultation. They also highlighted the importance of salmon in Indigenous cultures, including access to salmon as an integral component to the identity, culture, society, and economy of First Nations peoples. Consequently, First Nations indicated their desire to be at the table when it comes to setting planning priorities and to be engaged throughout WSP implementation.

Indigenous guardian and watchmen programs were held up as successful models for advancing co-management and collaboration on issues of common interest, and adequate funding for this programming and First Nations capacity building was raised as a key component to effective collaboration.

Some respondents wanted the scope of the Wild Salmon Policy to be expanded to include Steelhead and aquaculture. The interest in Steelhead included assurance that the Government of Canada was working with the Government of BC to ensure appropriate actions were in place to protect and rebuild populations. Several participants raised concerns about aquaculture, including requests for studies on the impacts of open net-pen salmon farming on wild salmon populations; the elimination of finfish farms; and for finfish farms to be moved onto land in closed containment structures. There was also a request for all aspects of the Cohen Commission recommendations regarding aquaculture to be implemented, and a desire for more information in the plan on DFO's aquaculture management approach.

### *Stakeholder input*

Many smaller communities emphasized the importance of salmon to their local economies, particularly in regards to sport fishing and tourism, and welcomed efforts to rebuild wild salmon stocks. Many noted that as a keystone species, salmon are important for bears, eagles, and whales – which are also significant tourism drivers. A number of people asked for a coordinated approach to catch limits for commercial and sports fisheries and for ways to mitigate impacts of fishing on rivers with actively spawning salmon.

The usefulness of education and outreach programs such as Salmonids in the Classroom and the Salmon Enhancement Program were noted as cornerstone programs for public appreciation of salmon. However, more collaboration between researchers and DFO was also suggested as a way to increase

efficiency, integrity and the speed of developing support tools and filling knowledge gaps. Finally, there was a call for stronger conservation measures and for an increase in the number of streams being monitored and restored.

Many comments echoed interests by First Nations to expand the scope of the Wild Salmon Policy to include Steelhead populations, especially given Steelhead's significant economic importance to the recreational sector. Respondents wanted assurance that Steelhead would be listed as an endangered species on the Thompson River. Commercial fishers, sports fishers and members of the general public also wanted the scope expanded to include specific measures being taken to reduce impact of open net finfish farms. While some called for an outright ban on fish farms, others suggested their gradual elimination along the coast and a move from open net to land-based containment.

### *How this input is reflected in the WSP Implementation Plan*

The Plan includes overarching approaches in the Introduction Section which highlights concerns raised above including:

- engagement with First Nations, partners and stakeholders
- the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and local expertise in assessment, planning and delivery
- support for First Nations fisheries' governance processes
- successful collaboration
- opportunities for integrating WSP objectives into planning, management, and program activities in both annual and multi-year work planning processes
- a focus on standards of best practice based on lessons learned.

The importance of salmon to Indigenous groups and as a keystone species is a cornerstone of salmon management, and is highlighted in the Introduction and Yukon sections. Community capacity building and educational opportunities are highlighted in the work that the Salmon Enhancement Program undertakes and through integrated planning discussions at local roundtables (see Assessment – Strategies 2 & 3, and Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 5). Salmon assessment, including monitoring is captured under Assessment – Strategy 1 and Strategies 2 & 3, and management approaches are captured under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4 and Strategy 5.

The scope of the Wild Salmon Policy remains focused on the five salmon species, but to address interests around Steelhead, there is additional information on the joint approach by the governments of BC and Canada under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4. The Province of British Columbia manages habitat and recreational Steelhead Trout fisheries, and in 2016, released a *Provincial Framework for Steelhead Management in British Columbia* (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/fish/docs/Provincial-Framework-for-Steelhead-Management-in-BC-April-2016.pdf>). Under the *Fisheries Act*, DFO is responsible for protecting fish habitat, and cooperates with BC on reducing incidental impacts of salmon fisheries on co-migrating Steelhead Trout, including timing of commercial salmon fisheries openings, use of selective fishing gear, enforcement of bycatch licence conditions, support for stewardship, and the implementation of regulatory measures to protect fish

habitat. DFO is currently working on appropriate management objectives related to the recent COSEWIC assessment.

DFO is the primary regulator of aquaculture activities in BC. The department works with the Province of BC, First Nations communities, industry, and other partners to ensure that potential risks to wild fish stocks and ecosystems are identified and appropriately managed. The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring any risks to wild salmon from aquaculture are mitigated, and the aquaculture management approach is now more clearly outlined under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4. Activities in the Plan that specifically address aquaculture include: reviewing the requirements for salmon farms in order to ensure risks to wild salmon are decreased, ensuring mandatory reporting to the Aquaculture Activities Regulation, and completing scientific research and a risk assessment process with respect to the risk of net-pen salmon farms in the Discovery Islands area to migrating Fraser River Sockeye salmon.

## **Funding**

### *First Nations input*

Groups wanted to know the cost of fully implementing the WSP, and the cost of activities the Department committed to in the Plan. There was also general consensus that additional internal and external funding should be available to help deliver the objectives of the WSP.

### *Stakeholder input*

Stakeholders expressed similar calls for stable long-term funding for WSP implementation, including a desire for sufficient DFO field personnel in area offices and communities. Many participants expressed their belief that it would be impossible to implement the Plan without gathering more comprehensive information on the status of wild salmon populations.

### *How this input is reflected in the WSP Implementation Plan*

Managing Pacific salmon is complex, and in the Pacific region, over \$80M is focused on salmon activities. This includes recent investments in the Budget 2016 investment in ocean and freshwater science; the Oceans Protection Plan (2016)'s Coastal Restoration Fund; Budget 2017 funding for renewal and expansion of Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative which augments Indigenous collaborative management programming; and, Pacific Salmon Treaty-related obligations, including salmon stock assessment, coded wire tagging, and catch monitoring. The Department is committed to long-term WSP implementation, and as part of the Minister's 2018 Mandate Letter Commitment is working on a broader BC Wild Salmon Strategy to ensure this happens.

## **Governance**

### *First Nations input*

Many groups called for clear governance structures to be outlined in the Plan, and were interested in a co-management model where First Nations and DFO would work in partnership in both setting priorities and delivering programming. Some expressed interest in having the work of the Department more closely align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There was

interest in how to better involve the Government of BC in habitat work, and interagency communication and collaboration were seen as key factors to successfully implement the WSP.

Specifically, in Yukon, there was interest in having the existing co-management model better reflected in the Plan. Yukon salmon and their habitats are co-managed through an integrated process involving First Nations governments, the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, and the federal government, and feedback from Yukon First Nations centred on the need for the Plan to reflect this unique approach.

### *Stakeholder input*

There were similar calls from stakeholders for provincial and local governments to work together with the federal government to protect and restore salmon populations and habitats. Some respondents wanted the Plan to specify how activities would support governance structures (for example, how local governments would be supported), while others were interested more generally in the wild salmon governance model in BC and Yukon. Others were interested in governance beyond government interaction – for example, how commercial and recreational fishers feed into the governance model. Finally, some respondents also raised the issue of international governance, and in particular, communication between Canada and Alaska and Washington State regarding fishing quotas.

### *How this input is reflected in the WSP Implementation Plan*

To clarify how governance of salmon is approached, an infographic and supporting text were included in the Introduction, as well as information on how different governments have different jurisdictions in relation to habitat in the Assessment – Strategies 2 & 3 section. The Plan notes that, while the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has a mandate for management of salmon and fisheries habitat in Canada, DFO's Pacific Regional Director General has overall responsibility and accountability for the delivery of the activities in the WSP Implementation Plan. Salmon-related work occurs across multiple sectors within DFO's Pacific Region and is not linear or practiced in silos. The Plan details the Pacific Region governance framework responsible for ensuring that WSP implementation work continues.

The Introduction also reflects the Government of Canada's commitment to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, because of the unique context of the Yukon, the co-management structure is outlined in the standalone Wild Salmon in Yukon – A Co-management Approach section.

More generally, the Department heard that collaboration and partnerships are key to successful integrated planning initiatives, and that implementation requires a governance structure that identifies the planning participants, their roles and responsibilities, timelines, resources and deliverables. DFO recognizes that the WSP's goal cannot be achieved alone, and the Plan builds a framework by focusing on activities that build supportive partnerships and that standardize methods.

## **Theme 1: Assessment**

The Assessment theme (WSP Strategies 1, 2 and 3) reflects the interconnectedness between Conservation Unit (CU) assessment and habitat and ecosystem impacts, including assessment and monitoring of salmon, their habitats and ecosystems.



## *First Nations input*

### *CU Assessment*

In general, groups were interested in understanding how Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge Systems are considered as part of the CU assessment process, and in how CUs are prioritized for assessment and response. Some respondents expressed concern about data deficiencies, the intensive vs. extensive model, and on how different types of data (intensive and extensive) contribute to assessment. There was also interest in understanding how CUs and Management Units (MUs) align, and how scientists consider the impacts to CUs when looking at rebuilding at the MU level. The challenge of data sharing was noted several times, and some suggested standardizing monitoring and assessment methodology so First Nations could more easily contribute to stock assessment. Others expressed concerns that there was no existing capacity currently to undertake assessment work, and that any additional expectation would require funding and capacity building.

### *Habitat and Ecosystems*

There was a desire for the Plan to include further information on habitat assessment and ecosystems as well as for activities to develop report cards on freshwater spawning and rearing habitat status.

The impact of logging and mining practices on salmon habitat and ecology was raised as a concern, and First Nations asked for DFO to work with industry and agencies that license these activities. Other sectors mentioned included agriculture and housing developers. Concerns were also raised about landfills, pipelines, train derailments, and mineral spills.

There was widespread agreement that climate change is adversely affecting salmon populations, reflecting concerns that fishery closures may not be enough to reverse diminishing returns. Climate change was seen to affect salmon and its habitat at multiple levels, and respondents asked DFO to proactively consider climate change impacts when developing management plans.

## *Stakeholder input*

### *CU Assessment*

As with feedback from First Nations, there was interest in understanding how CU information is included when determining an assessment at the MU level. Respondents were interested in plans for outstanding assessments and in the cycle for reassessing CUs, and requested data accessibility.

Concerns were expressed about the impacts of commercial and recreational fishing on wild salmon populations. Some respondents were interested in how to partner with the government on assessment, including engaging more community groups in stream counts, assessment and monitoring, and asked for standardized assessment methods and reporting to be able to contribute to these goals.

Respondents were interested in the Pacific Salmon Explorer tool developed by the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and were interested in how this tool could be used in determining local efforts to address habitat issues. There was also interest in what programming was available for habitat rehabilitation and protection of fish habitat during the five-year implementation period.

### *Habitat and Ecosystems*

There was interest in how the Government of BC and the Government of Canada work together to ensure salmon habitat is protected. There were calls for DFO to take a leadership role in both compliance promotion and enforcement in habitat protection.

The cumulative impact of natural resources activities on salmon was also raised, including concerns about the impacts on salmon habitat from industries such as forestry and mining. Many wanted to ensure that an ecosystem-based approach was being taken with assessment and rebuilding, with some highlighting the challenges of biosystems such as beaver dams and predators. At a global level, there were also concerns about climate change and how this impacted local ecosystems, including the impact of droughts and wildfires on fish habitat.

### *How this input is reflected in the WSP Implementation Plan*

#### *CU Assessment*

The Plan outlines how DFO undertakes assessment of CUs in Assessment – Strategy 1, including how CUs are identified based on genetic traits, biogeographic distribution, life-history characteristics, and local knowledge systems. Activities in this section commit the Department to implementing prioritization methods for assessing and monitoring CUs or groups of CUs, modifying or developing metrics, and documenting new status assessment methods. Under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4, the Plan also outlines how rebuilding plans will be at the MU scale, but with information at the finer CU scale to ensure information for a particular Red CU would not be lost if the MU aggregate was considered to be healthy overall.

DFO is committed to improving documentation of standards for monitoring programs, and improved annual updates to the New Salmon Escapement Data System (NuSEDS) published on the Open Data portal (<https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/c48669a3-045b-400d-b730-48aafe8c5ee6>). The Department is also committed to standardizing methods to allow for easier partnership on stock assessment and monitoring.

The Assessment – Strategy 1 section of the Plan clarifies the intensive vs. extensive model of data collection, and why both are necessary for a robust, cost effective system. The Pacific Salmon Explorer (showcased in Assessment – Strategies 2 & 3) can display both kinds of data including a snapshot of individual salmon CUs (salmon abundance, trends over time, productivity, run timing, estimates of biological status, etc.), and can be used to determine priority areas for coastal restoration projects and provide support for the development of strategies for mitigating key threats and pressures that may be hindering the recovery of important salmon populations.

#### *Habitat and Ecosystems*

Salmon habitat and ecosystems are an important component to salmon population health as outlined under Assessment – Strategies 2 & 3. The Plan commits DFO to identify a set of core environmental indicators associated with ecosystem units and complete documentation of the Risk Assessment Method for Salmon (RAMS). It also highlights the importance of habitat report cards which draw on habitat characteristics, pressure and state indicators, vulnerability indicators at different life-history stages, and benchmarks to provide a snapshot of the current risks to salmon habitats in a watershed.

DFO has committed to work collaboratively with BC on tools to assess cumulative effects and to support ongoing initiatives that increase interagency communication on cumulative effects. Further research projects investigating specific modelling approaches are either in progress or are under consideration. The Plan also clarifies the jurisdictional responsibilities of both DFO and BC, and further detail the work BC is doing to understand and reduce the impacts of industry, including the tools BC has in place such as legislation, regulations, assessment tools and a cumulative effects framework to ensure that fish habitat is protected and maintained during provincially regulated activities.

Calls for increased focus on habitat rehabilitation are reflected in Assessment – Strategies 2&3 in a section on Habitat Restoration, which documents work done through the Salmon Enhancement Program Resource Restoration Unit, and the Coastal Restoration Fund (<http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/crf-frc/index-eng.html>), as well as detailing Roundtables that promote habitat stewardship, and work being done through the Coastal Restoration Fund. Furthermore, the Fisheries Protection Program and the Conservation and Protection Directorate have mandate to administer fisheries protection provisions, including protocol for non-compliance.

The Plan documents ongoing research into the impacts of climate change and the intergovernmental partnerships required to respond to climate change pressures, such as the impact of climate and oceanographic conditions on Pacific salmon in Canada's State of the Ocean reporting.

## **Theme 2: Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks (formerly Integrated Planning and Program Delivery)**

The Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks theme (WSP Strategies 4 and 5) details work around progressive and integrated planning and annual program delivery, including how information from assessment activities can be used to manage, maintain and rebuild stocks and habitat.

### ***First Nations input***

Although most respondents agreed that it was important to have rebuilding plans in place, agreement about the ones that should be developed first varied. For example, opinions differed on whether CUs in the Red zone should be the top priority for rebuilding plans or if it should be balanced with ensuring Green CUs do not dip into the Amber or Red zones. Overall, it was clear that there was interest in a defined process for determining how to prioritize CUs for rebuilding plans, including triggers for developing a rebuilding plan and suggestions that DFO develop and implement a risk-based approach for prioritizing CUs based on feedback from First Nation groups.

Some feedback focused on specific pieces of information that should be included in a rebuilding plan, including fisheries management, habitat status, traditional knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge Systems information, and impacts of fisheries on wild stocks. Respondents asked for accountability regarding escapement numbers, spawning densities, and abundances of species from year to year, as well as the public release of the results of monitoring and assessment.

Many respondents emphasized that partnerships are essential. Several respondents wanted more information about how First Nations fit into the planning process, including how collaboration and

traditional knowledge could be better recognized through the activities and narrative of the Plan. There was a desire for clarity around which programs within sectors undertake work, and clarity around what external partners could take on, and what funding sources would be available to do so.

Several First Nations shared examples where integrated planning had been beneficial and where valuable lessons were learned. For example: the Philips River - where return numbers have rebounded; the Cowichan Tribes - which received Ministry of Transport funding to broaden dykes; Lil'wat Nation's land use plan - developed with the provincial government; and the Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable - whose work is focused on protecting the valley's water and watershed. To support such knowledge, it was suggested that a repository or list of where to find further information on both projects and CUs be made available.

There was also a request that planning processes take into account more than traditional socio-economic considerations, and instead include First Nations values, knowledge and priorities. This included a call for a First-Nations-driven socio-economic methodology that incorporates First Nations values.

Focusing on the year to year operations, some respondents suggested more resources were needed to encourage enhancement of salmon stocks. However, this was tempered by suggestions that, while assistance was needed in some geographical regions to increase wild salmon numbers for deteriorating stocks, hatchery intervention should be temporary. Furthermore, many respondents wanted guidelines to be developed to address risks related to interaction between wild and enhanced populations and to ensure DFO's hatchery risk management tool aligns with WSP objectives, and there were suggestions that stream enhancement could be undertaken by First Nations caretakers.

There was also widespread concern regarding habitat protection regulations and their enforcement. Groups called for an increase in both DFO officers and First Nation Guardians in these areas.

### *Stakeholder input*

Similar to feedback from First Nations, stakeholders wanted to see more information on rebuilding plans within the Implementation Plan particularly around declining stocks that are in the Amber or Red zone. Red CUs were a key concern for many, with some commenting that in their opinion, limited data could create problems for monitoring and implementation. Others wanted to know what triggers rebuilding planning, how different CUs are prioritized (e.g. what actions are put in place to avoid a CU entering a Red zone), and once rebuilding planning is triggered, what the responsibilities and timelines for decision-making are. However, there were differing opinions on which regions and species should be given top priority.

Many focused on the various aspects of rebuilding – from fisheries management and predator control to enhancement and habitat rehabilitation. A number of respondents expressed concern about the risks of enhancement for the conservation of wild salmon, while also acknowledging that enhancement can contribute to rebuilding salmon stocks, and to meet the needs to recreational fishers, whales and other predators. Some wanted strategies to address the influence of fish hatcheries on wild salmon stocks, and more science on potential risks to the genetic diversity of wild salmon, while others saw increases in

hatcheries and hatchery production as a solution to declining stocks. Ultimately, respondents sought clarity on the role of enhancement in protecting, rebuilding, and maintaining wild salmon populations.

Many people called for improved habitat protection and enforcement ability as part of a rebuilding strategy, with some stakeholders identifying anticipated changes to the *Fisheries Act* as a potential tool to support this. Others suggested that an independent science panel could be created to prioritize Red CUs, help in developing rebuilding plans, and provide an annual report card on Wild Salmon Policy implementation.

Overall, partnerships were emphasized as the best approach, including in partnering on habitat rehabilitation work and the value of developing salmon roundtables. It was felt that when all partners are involved in planning the outcomes are much stronger, and silos are reduced resulting in better communication and collaboration between DFO and other partners.

### *How this input is reflected in the WSP Implementation Plan*

The Plan outlines the Department's commitments around rebuilding plans in the Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4. This includes publishing guidance outlining how DFO responds to Red status CUs, clarifying the connections between CUs and MUs, and improving the incorporation of existing available habitat and ecosystem status information into Integrated Fisheries Management Plans (IFMPs). The Plan outlines two types of rebuilding plans: Species at Risk Act (SARA) recovery planning triggered by any salmon species listed under SARA; and long-term strategic plans at the MU level for priority MUs composed of red CUs. Rebuilding plans will include information such as stock status description, stock trends, reason(s) for the stock's decline (if applicable), enhancement plans, habitat concerns and opportunities, and management actions.

Under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 5, the Plan outlines how data limited situations are not necessarily problematic. More intensive monitoring and assessment does not always lead to better management outcomes, and conversely, data limited systems are not necessarily a problem when risk is managed by implementing a more precautionary management system. DFO Science is working on a strategic stock assessment planning process to inform the conservation of salmon, their habitats and sustainable fisheries across the region.

Both the WSP and the Plan point to the need for improved cooperation with partners with partners, and the Department is committed to standardizing methods and building a framework for the delivery of the WSP so that the Department can better support partnerships and communities in undertaking work related to salmon. Under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4, the Plan identifies a number of winning conditions for integrated planning, top of which is collaboration and partnerships. The Plan acknowledges that First Nations communities, other levels of government, partners and stakeholders should be involved early on and throughout the planning processes, including setting objectives, and developing and evaluating management strategies, and gives examples of existing roundtables as a potential option for this type of partnership. Additionally, to help partners find additional information, Annex 4 – Tools and Resources was added.

Clarity on the role of enhancement (including hatchery, spawning streams, and habitat rehabilitation) in wild salmon conservation is reflected in the Plan under Maintaining and Rebuilding Stocks – Strategy 4. This section documents DFO’s approach to understanding and mitigating the risks that hatchery enhancement may pose to wild salmon, and reflects the positive impacts enhancement can have on the wild populations. The department is committed to developing explicit biological goals for enhancement by June 2020, and to ensuring that opportunities are explored while risks are mitigated through the development of guidelines.

Enforcement is an important part of ensuring a sustainable resource. The Department remains committed to enforcement including investigating incidents of non-compliance as part of its Conservation and Protection programming, and administration of fisheries protection provisions under the *Fisheries Act* through the Fisheries Protection Program (see Assessment – Strategies 2 &3).

The Department uses independent science panels such as COSEWIC for endangered species, and relies on advice from various advisory committees. DFO is developing guidance on prioritizing red CUs for MU level rebuilding plans, and will be consulting on this framework.

### **Theme 3: Accountability**

The Accountability theme (Strategy 6) commits the Department to completing activities and reporting publicly on progress to ensure that the activities and governance structures in this Plan are operationalized and effective.

#### ***First Nations input***

Many thought that DFO should keep the Plan up to date and work in partnership with First Nations to record qualitative and quantitative observations for local areas. This could include details on zone-specific habitat assessments, allowing people to view current status information while concurrently increasing transparency.

Most respondents wanted annual reporting and an understanding of progress being made on activities that DFO was committing to.

#### ***Stakeholder input***

Comments received regarding accountability focused on the need for more detailed deliverables. Respondents wanted concrete timelines and target dates, as well as the results of implemented assessment and monitoring. Groups called for the Plan to align with the Strategies and Action Steps laid out in the WSP to allow for greater and transparency more clarity in reporting. There were also calls for regular public communication on progress, and clear reporting of results.

Additionally, respondents requested the identification of specific DFO staff and teams responsible for activities. Others suggested appointing leaders to coordinate and oversee work between DFO sectors, First Nations and other partners.

### *How this input is reflected in the WSP Implementation Plan*

DFO is in agreement with calls for regular reporting on the progress around the Plan. Recognizing the need for clear accountability DFO has committed in Accountability – Strategy 6 to annually review its activities, with a full review to be undertaken at the end of the Plan’s five-year period. DFO also expects to review and update the Plan in 2020 to include additional activities that result from any new programming, including that related to salmon work under a renewed *Fisheries Act*.

Annual reporting data will help evaluators map where work remains to meet broader WSP objectives. It is expected that qualitative interviews both inside and outside of the Department will explore WSP operations in greater depth, along with possible areas of focus for the subsequent implementation plan. Annual updates will highlight progress in key areas as well as mitigation strategies for any activities that are off-track, thus allowing for adjustments to be made when activities are leading to unintended results and for additional activities to be included, as necessary.

The purpose of the five-year review is to assess WSP implementation progress, explore key findings, and help identify priorities for consideration in subsequent implementation planning. In this way, implementation will continue to build on past work to achieve incremental and ongoing progress.

Reflecting calls from respondents for the Strategy framework outlined within the Wild Salmon Policy to be reflected in the Plan, the Plan themes link directly to the strategies outlined within the Policy. Further, implementation activities at the end of each section are outlined within the original actions steps identified within the Policy. Activity tables in the Plan now include target dates and also identify the lead DFO sector and program responsible for each activity to be undertaken.

In response to calls for coordination in overseeing the implementation of activities, the Accountability theme of the Plan outlines the internal governance process in place to oversee WSP implementation, including how the Pacific Regional Director General who has the overall responsibility and accountability for the delivery of activities in the Plan works with sectors through the Strategic Salmon Directors Committee to integrate WSP-related work. The executive level committee discussions on Pacific salmon are also supported by the integrative work done by three regional departmental working groups: the WSP Committee, the Salmon Working Group and the Salmon Stock Assessment Coordinating Committee. Finally, The Plan also details the federal, provincial/territorial and First Nations jurisdictions as these relate to terrestrial, freshwater, foreshore, and marine environments.

### **Conclusion**

DFO acknowledges the dedication to protecting wild Pacific salmon demonstrated by hundreds of British Columbians and Yukoners through their feedback on the fall 2017 initial *draft Wild Salmon Policy Implementation Plan*. During the consultations process, the Department heard broadly from First Nations and Stakeholders that, while there were different views on the format of consultations, the process was welcomed. Participants frequently expressed appreciation at having their voices heard.

The First Nations, stakeholders and partners who took time to contribute to the Plan greatly improved the document, and ultimately, contributions from all will be vital to the success of the goal of the Wild

Salmon Policy in the long-term, “to restore and maintain healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Canada in perpetuity”.

The Department is eager to continue engaging with partners and working together throughout the implementation period and beyond to protect wild Pacific salmon for ecosystem well-being and future generations of Canadians.