

March 14, 2025

To:

The Honorable Joann Thompson
Minister, Fishery, Oceans and the Coast Guard
200 Kent St
Station 15N100
Ottawa ON, K1A 0E6

Re: DFO Proposed Termination of SVIAC Sooke Chinook Enhancement Initiative / Orca Food Security Program (SCEI/OFSP) as outlined in Attachment 1 – Letter to SFAC Victoria on February 3, 2025

Dear Minister Thompson,

As the stewards and custodians of the Sooke Chinook Enhancement Initiative / Orca Food Security Program for the past eight years, the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition (SVIAC) with ongoing support from T'Sou-ke First Nation and the Sooke community expresses profound disappointment regarding the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Department) lack of transparency, lack of engagement, lack of consultation, and lack of formal communication regarding the Departments decision to terminate the highly beneficial and successful SCEI / OFSP in the Sooke Basin.

SVIAC expresses its deep concern and outrage over the:

1. **Lack of Consultation or Engagement:** The Department failed to undertake any formal or informal engagement or consultation with SVIAC regarding its strategy and decision to terminate the SCEI/OFSP. This includes neglecting to analyze or recognize the success of SVIAC's highly regarded project.
2. **Absence of Formal Notification:** As of the date of this letter, SVIAC has not received any formal notification from the Department concerning the decision to terminate the SCEI/OFSP.
3. **Exclusion of Stakeholders:** The Department's strategy and decision appear to have been finalized and approved without meaningful stakeholder engagement. This includes failing to involve SVIAC, the T'Sou-ke First Nation, or the Sooke community. Instead, the process for inviting comments and feedback was reduced to a mere procedural formality, undermining the integrity of stakeholder collaboration.

SVIAC has provided a detailed response (Attachment 2) to the Department's rationale, and respectfully requests a meeting with you or your staff at your earliest convenience to discuss the following recommendations:

1. Formal documentation of the Department's consultation and decision-making process, including supporting data, be provided to SVIAC.
2. The Department's strategy be realigned with SVIAC's Sooke River Chinook conservation goals, T'Sou-ke First Nation interests, and ecological benefits be reconsidered.
3. SVIAC's SCEI/ OFSP requirements (500,000 smolts) be reinstated in the 2025 IFMP – SEP Production Plan for Spring 2026 out planting.
4. SVIAC notes that the Department's 2025 IFMP / SEP / Hatchery Production Planning process is currently underway and **time is of the essence** to include SVIAC's SCEI / OFSP in the 2025 Production Plan / IFMP.
5. Long term alternative solutions for the Sooke River Chinook recovery be explored to address local resource and ecological concerns while continuing the SCEI/ OFSP.
6. The broader consequences on First Nation, local fisheries, local communities and ecosystems be prioritized in future studies and deliberations.



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SVIAC remains deeply committed to the conservation of Chinook salmon on the Sooke River. We strongly urge the Department to immediately engage with us, the T'Sou-ke First Nation, and other Sooke community stakeholders in a meaningful and collaborative manner.

This project is critical to the health of the Sooke River Chinook population and the broader ecosystem, including the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales, as well as to the cultural well-being of the T'Sou-ke First Nation and the economic well-being of the Sooke community. We are eager to meet with you and your team to discuss the next steps and work toward an informed and unified decision that ensures the continuation of this important initiative.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and to fostering a partnership that supports both conservation and community.

Respectfully,

Bill Campbell
President, Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition

cc:

Annette Gibbons - Deputy Minister, Fishery, Oceans and the Coast Guard
Susan Chambers – Regional Director General, Pacific Region, DFO
Hon. Clifford Small, Conservative Shadow Minister for Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard.
Hon. Lisa Marie Barron, NDP Shadow Minister for Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard.
Hon. Mel Arnold – Conservative MP - North Okanagan—Shuswap, British Columbia
Hon. Rick Perkins - Conservative MP - South Shore—St. Margarets
Hon. Bob Zimmer- Conservative MP - Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies
Hon. Ed Fast- Conservative MP – Abbotsford
Hon. Gary Lunn – Retired - Conservative MP - Saanich – Gulf Islands
Hon. Randall Garrison – Retired – NDP – Esquimalt – Saanich - Sooke
Larry Underwood – Chief - T'Sou-ke First Nation
Russ Chipps – Chief - SC'ianew First Nation
Ray Vowles - President, Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society
Andy Schell - President, Sooke Salmon Enhancement Society – Jack Brooks Hatchery
Chris Bos – Chair – Victoria SFAC
Martin Paish – Chair – SFAB - Conference Board
Maja Tait – Mayor – Sooke
Scott Goodmanson – Mayor - Langford
Stewart Young – Former Mayor – Langford / Alpine Group
Rob Brouwer – Nitinat Hatchery, DFO
Mark Frisson - Fisheries Management, DFO
Heather Wright – Community Liaison, DFO
Jesse Zeman – President, BC Wildlife Federation
Doug Bancroft – President Zone 1, BC Wildlife Federation

Attachment 1 - Proposed Changes to Nitinat River Chinook Production Strategy for 2025 Brood Year

Attachment 2 - SVIAC Response to Rationale Received from DFO to Terminate SCEI / OFSP



South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition Society

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