



For Immediate Release

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Cohen Commission undertaking ambitious science research program

(Vancouver) The Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River is undertaking an ambitious scientific research program to help the Commissioner understand the science behind the decline of Fraser River sockeye. The commission is contracting with qualified and experienced external scientific researchers to study a wide range of technical and scientific issues designed to address potential causes for the decline. A description of these research projects is available at www.cohencommission.ca.

“We have established 12 research projects to study aspects of the decline of Fraser River sockeye salmon, as well as the cumulative effects on the decline,” said Brian Wallace, senior commission counsel. “The researchers were chosen for their academic credentials, professional publications, professional reputation, practical experience, recognized expertise and knowledge relevant to Fraser River sockeye salmon or ecosystems.”

In most cases, the researchers will provide the commission with a progress report by November 15, 2010 and a final report by January 31, 2011. These reports will be peer-reviewed with researchers and external reviewers providing critical analysis. The researchers will summarize their findings and conclusions during the commission’s public evidentiary hearings in the winter, at which counsel for participants will have an opportunity to question the researchers and test their theories.

The commission is also considering other processes for exploring the various technical and scientific issues, such as panel discussions and forums in which experts retained by the commission and those nominated by participants could exchange views and challenge each other’s findings and conclusions in an open but non-adversarial setting.

Transition of the Scientific Advisory Panel

At the beginning of the commission’s scientific research program a Scientific Advisory Panel composed of six pre-eminent fisheries scientists was created to assist with the development of the commission’s scientific research program. The commission has determined it is appropriate to transition from the model of the Scientific Advisory Panel to a new model that will focus on the peer review of the researchers’ reports.

“The Panel members, all pre-eminent scientists with a high degree of expertise in the areas to be investigated by the commission, have performed their advisory role in a completely independent, professional manner in the best interests of the commission,” said Wallace. “At this time, however, we have concluded that a peer review model will best serve the commission’s science program going forward.”

About the Cohen Commission

The Cohen Commission (www.cohencommission.ca) was established on November 5, 2009 with the appointment of the Honourable Bruce Cohen as Commissioner. Under its Terms of Reference, the commission will hold hearings to investigate and report on the decline of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. Based on its findings, the commission will make recommendations for improving the future sustainability of the sockeye salmon fishery in the

Fraser River, including, as required, any changes to the policies, practices and procedures of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in relation to the management of the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery.

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