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The IA's ruling on Monday against the claims of environmental groups brings the three salmon fisheries closer to certification. (Photo: StockFile/FIS)

Adjudicator rules in favour of MSC



CANADA

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An Independent Adjudicator (IA) on Monday ruled to not uphold objections raised by environmental groups against the [Marine Stewardship Council's](#) (MSC) certification of the Fraser River salmon fishery as sustainable. Independent salmon trollers and others are rejoicing.

"Good for the fish, good for fishermen and good for the future," commented independent salmon troller Mike Griswold, who has partook in the Fraser Panel of the Pacific Salmon Commission's (PSC) twice weekly in-season decision-making process on run size and fishing opportunities since 1985, *CNW* reports.

The certifier will now submit the Final Certification Report to MSC recommending the certification of the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery. Following final internal MSC review of the documents, the certifier may issue a certificate and MSC would then announce certification.

In February, BC environmental groups the [David Suzuki Foundation](#), Skeena Wild Conservation Trust and [Watershed Watch Salmon Society](#) all filed an objection over TAVEL Certification's (now part of [Moody Marine Ltd](#)) decision that the Fraser River salmon fishery should be certified by the MSC.

"This certification could actually result in well-intentioned consumers buying an endangered Fraser River sockeye with an eco-label on it," said Jeffrey Young, aquatic biologist with the David Suzuki Foundation, *BC Local News* reports.

Conservationists believe the MSC should at least wait until after the Cohen Commission into Fraser sockeye submits its findings and work is begun to replenish fragile stocks.

Watershed Watch Salmon Society ecologist Aaron Hill believes the MSC's objective is to intensify market penetration for its brand and the certifiers it counts on are hired and paid directly by the industry.

"It's a rigged process," he declared.

Twelve Canadian fisheries are now certified to the MSC standard and 17 are in the assessment process. BC certified fisheries include halibut, albacore tuna and the three units of sockeye salmon.

The Fraser River fishery is managed collaboratively by the Fraser River Panel (FRP) (consisting of government, First Nations and recreational and commercial interests from

the US and Canada). The PSC advises the Fraser River Panel and to [Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#) (DFO) on run size, stock identification, timing of returns and migration conditions.

DFO recently established a commission to analyse the decline of the Fraser River salmon stock.

Although uncertainty exists in the scientific community as to the reasons for low sockeye returns, it is believed that commercial fishing is not the cause, as breeding stock levels were high the four years prior.

"Pretty much everyone accepts that whatever went wrong happened after the smolts went to sea," Griswold said.

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- [MSC faces official objection for Fraser sockeye certification](#)

By Natalia Real
editorial@fis.com
www.fis.com