



## Tensions run high over salmon certification

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NGOs are unhappy with the way the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) announced the certification of segments of the Canadian salmon fishery, and insist other parts of the fishery are not suitable for certification at all.

According to an announcement from the MSC on Friday, three Canadian sockeye salmon fisheries are certified sustainable, but the Fraser River sockeye section of the fishery -- [the subject of an objection from a group of NGOs](#) -- is still not certified pending the results of the decision of an independent adjudicator.

Canadian NGOs are not only unhappy about the certification -- which began in 2001 -- but the timing and manner of the announcement.

This announcement was a bit of a surprise," Aaron Hill, an ecologist for Watershed Watch, told *IntraFish*. "The announcement came from MSC in the middle of a holiday weekend: Thursday, July 1, was Canada Day and many Canadians took a four-day weekend.

"Worse, the MSC did not send any notification to British Columbia environmental organizations, as they usually do."

Announcing certification of these fisheries in the middle of a holiday weekend without any notice to environmental stakeholders was a crass move on the part of the MSC, he said, especially considering they frequently boast about the transparency of their certification process.

Hill said he is hopeful the certification for sockeye harvested from the Skeena and Nass Rivers, and from Barkley Sound can have a positive impact.

"Our experience with MSC so far tells us that we will have to watch these fisheries very closely to ensure that the industry and management agency meet the certification conditions, and that the certifier enforces the conditions in the annual audits," he said.

"We are hopeful that the conditions associated with MSC certification for these three fisheries will be a significant driver for reducing overfishing on genetically distinct, irreplaceable, endangered salmon stocks that are caught as bycatch in these fisheries."

"The MSC has just granted eco-certification to three fisheries that routinely overharvest threatened and endangered salmon stocks," said Craig Orr, executive director of the Watershed Watch Salmon Society. "As disturbing as this is, the MSC has placed several conditions for improvement on these fisheries, and we will be watching closely to see if these conditions are enforced."

### Fraser River opposition

Earlier this year, three conservation groups from B.C. -- Watershed Watch Salmon Society, David Suzuki Foundation, and SkeenaWild Conservation Trust -- filed a notice of objection to the MSC's intention to award eco-certification to the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery.

As a result, the certification of the Fraser River sockeye fishery is temporarily on hold, pending the decision of an independent adjudicator, expected by July 10.

"We are still awaiting the decision of the independent adjudicator on our objection the Fraser River sockeye fishery, which wrapped up on May 26," said Hill. "We expect that decision within the next week or two. The management of the Fraser River sockeye fishery is currently under a federal judicial commission of inquiry, following a complete run collapse last year."

"We objected to the Fraser River certification because we believe it does not meet the MSC's own minimum standards for certification, and that the management of the fishery is so dysfunctional that the conditions of certification are very unlikely to be met within reasonable timelines", said Greg Knox, executive director of



PHOTO: Salmon are Sacred

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SkeenaWild conservation trust. "Overfishing is a serious concern in the Skeena, Nass, and Barkley Sound fisheries, but the situation is not as dire there as it is on the Fraser."

B.C. sockeye salmon are primarily exported as frozen or canned products, and approximately 10 percent is sold fresh. Japan is the largest consumer of frozen B.C. sockeye, importing more than 90 percent of the frozen product. The United Kingdom is the largest consumer of canned sockeye, importing more than 80 percent of that product type.

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