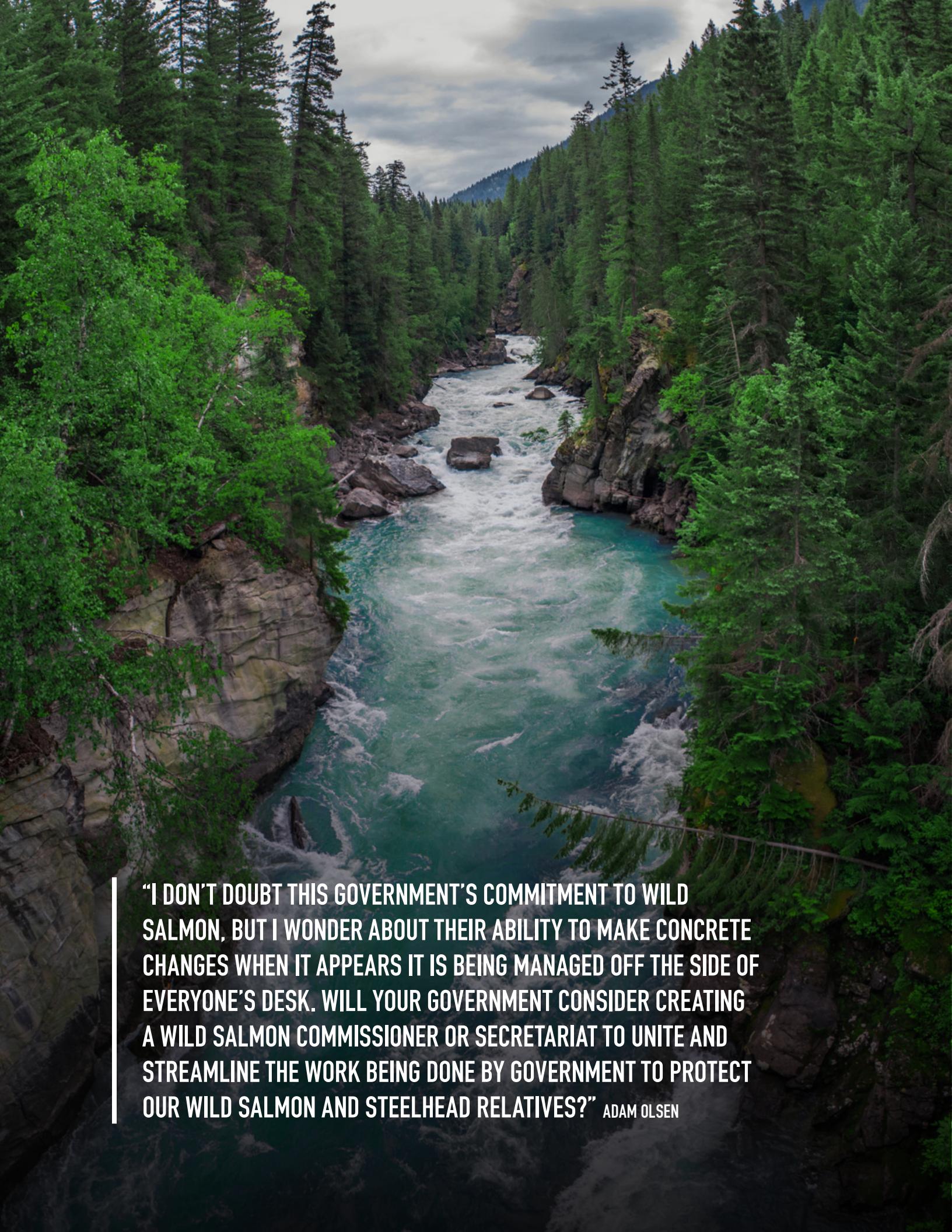


A photograph of a salmon swimming upstream in a river. The fish is in the foreground, its body angled upwards as it moves against the current. The water is turbulent and brownish. In the background, there's a lush green field and a range of mountains under a cloudy sky.

STANDING UP FOR
WILD SALMON

BC **GREEN** CAUCUS

A wide-angle photograph of a river flowing through a deep, narrow valley. The river's water is a vibrant turquoise color, contrasting with the surrounding dark green coniferous forests. Large, light-colored rock formations line the banks of the river, some with overhanging branches. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

"I DON'T DOUBT THIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO WILD SALMON, BUT I WONDER ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO MAKE CONCRETE CHANGES WHEN IT APPEARS IT IS BEING MANAGED OFF THE SIDE OF EVERYONE'S DESK. WILL YOUR GOVERNMENT CONSIDER CREATING A WILD SALMON COMMISSIONER OR SECRETARIAT TO UNITE AND STREAMLINE THE WORK BEING DONE BY GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT OUR WILD SALMON AND STEELHEAD RELATIVES?" ADAM OLSEN

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INTRODUCTION

MY SALMON STORY

I tell salmon stories often. I am a Brentwood kid who grew up on the water; just one in a long line to fish the Salish Sea. We come by it honestly, descendants of the Coast Salish reef-netters, the Pacific salmon are part of our family.

So many of us who live in Saanich North and the Islands, the riding I represent, have fished these waters. Salmon are a vitally important renewable resource and have been nurturing our coast for thousands of years.

The Saanich Inlet was once a plentiful salmon spot. Whether you are a multi-generational British Columbian or you have just arrived on the west coast, you likely have salmon close to your heart. But with every passing day, and each new generation of British Columbians, the power of the wild Pacific salmon is quietly diminishing. Our shifting baseline of what is normal for wild salmon returns to our rivers is slipping from millions to thousands, thousands to hundreds, hundreds to dozens.

Salmon runs in our area are crashing. The Chilcotin and Thompson steelhead fishery is on the brink of extinction. The threats to fish stocks are many - habitat and ecosystem degradation, poor management, fish farms and climate change.

Over the course of the Spring Legislative Session I have dedicated a large portion of my work in the Legislature to salmon policy. I have learned that six Ministries all have a “leading role” in addition to the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. From a provincial perspective, we need much better coordination.

So, I have made it my mission to speak for the salmon in the BC Legislature; raising their challenges in question period and canvassing the Ministries with salmon jurisdiction in estimates. Nearly every Minister’s answer has been some version of... ‘I care about wild salmon too, but, unfortunately, that’s not my job.’

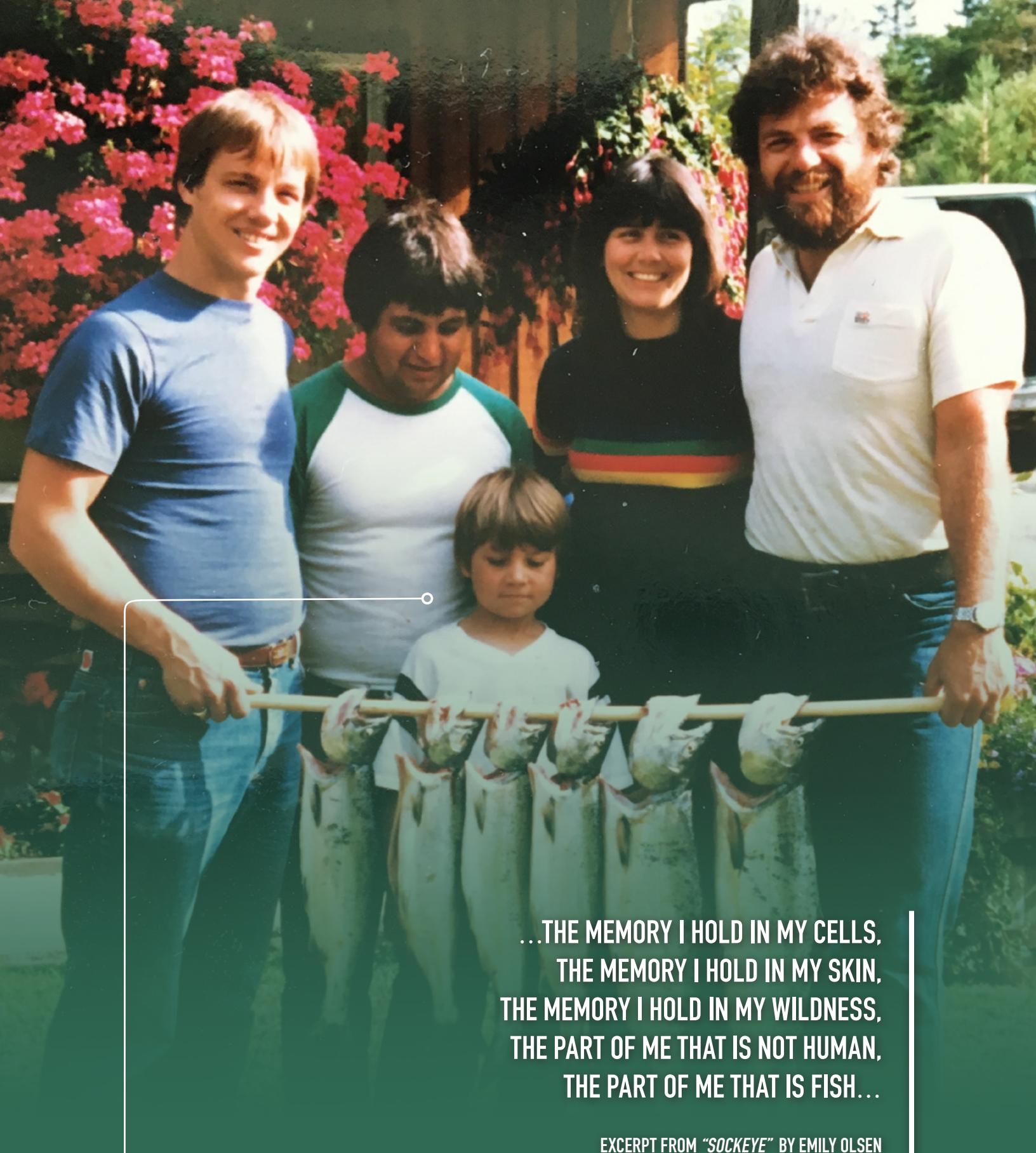
Amidst the finger pointing and confusion about who is doing what, I have found a possible path forward – BC needs to establish a Wild Salmon Secretariat or Commissioner to streamline all the work being done within the BC government and – importantly – be a strong defender of wild salmon in negotiations with the federal government. After all, good salmon policy is good environmental, social and economic policy.

I will continue to tell my salmon story and talk to people about theirs, so we don’t forget how our coasts and rivers used to run deep with salmon. We cannot let decimated salmon stocks become the new normal.



Adam Olsen

MLA Saanich North and the Islands
Spokesperson for wild salmon, BC Green Caucus

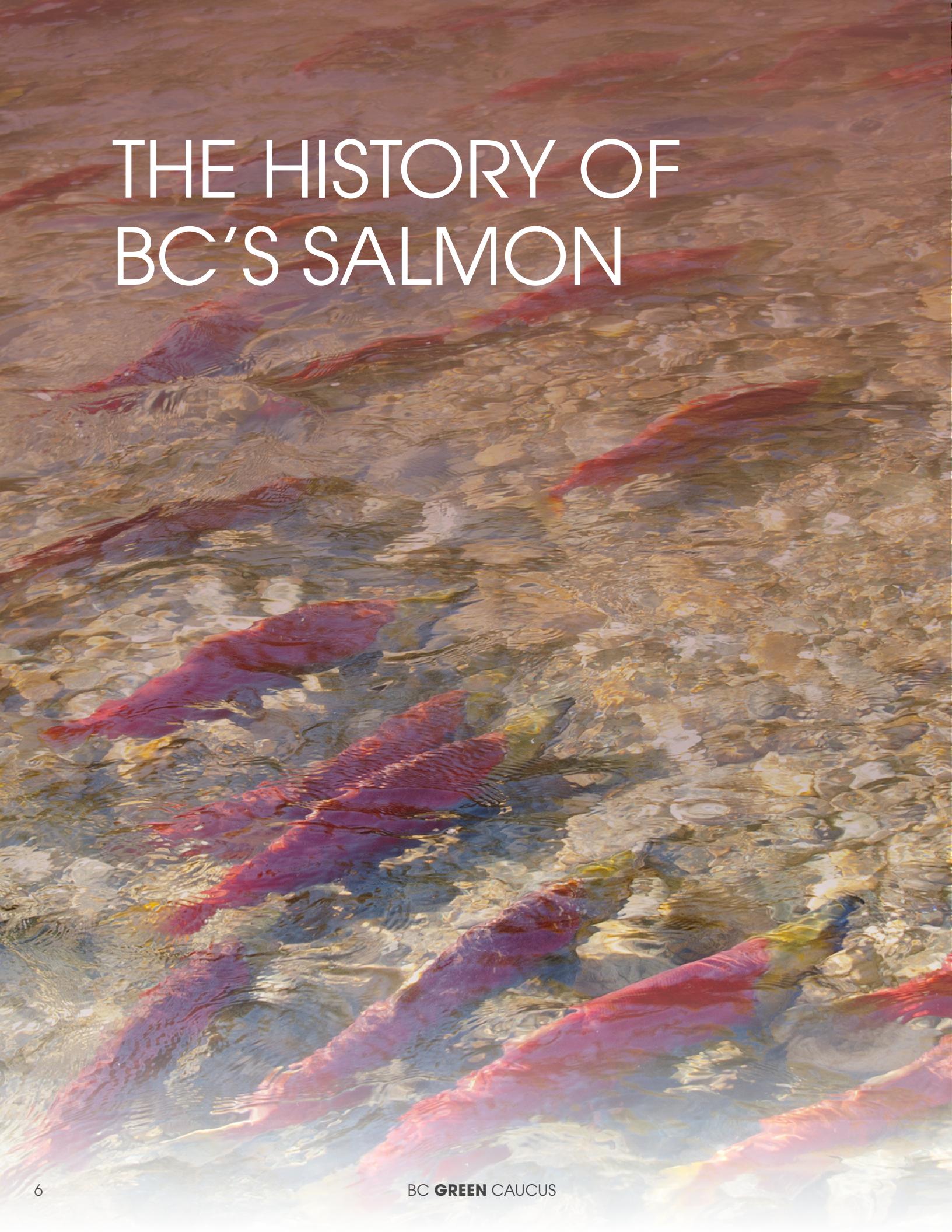


...THE MEMORY I HOLD IN MY CELLS,
THE MEMORY I HOLD IN MY SKIN,
THE MEMORY I HOLD IN MY WILDNESS,
THE PART OF ME THAT IS NOT HUMAN,
THE PART OF ME THAT IS FISH...

EXCERPT FROM "SOCKEYE" BY EMILY OLSEN

Adam Olsen with his family and their day's catch

THE HISTORY OF BC'S SALMON



“THE CRISES FACING BC’S WILD SALMON POPULATIONS, WHILE DIRE, PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION: STAKEHOLDERS, FIRST NATIONS, AND THE PUBLIC ARE ALIGNED AND EAGER FOR PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP ON THIS FILE LIKE NEVER BEFORE. PEOPLE ARE READY TO UNITE BEHIND A WILD SALMON HERO, A DEFENDER OF THE COAST, THE COASTAL ECONOMY AND COASTAL ENVIRONMENT.” ADAM OLSEN

Salmon emerged millions of years ago, evolving into six species in the Pacific Northwest. After the retreat of the glaciers, Chinook, Coho, sockeye, pink, chum and steelhead spread throughout the watersheds of what is now British Columbia, thriving in the cold, clean waters and becoming a foundation species for life on the West Coast.

Salmon have been a vital food source for First Nations since time immemorial, just as they have sustained populations of orca, grizzly bears, eagles, and other wildlife. Salmon hatch in freshwater and migrate to the ocean where they go on epic migrations before returning to spawn in their natal habitat. Equipped with an array of sensory receptors, salmon are able to find their way home by responding to light, atmospheric pressure, temperature, salinity and scent.

Pacific salmon, except for steelhead, die after spawning, in the process transferring valuable nutrients back to freshwater habitats. The bodies of spawned out salmon have nourished our great rainforests and enriched the lakes, providing food for trout and young salmon.

It is no wonder people refer to the return of salmon each year as one of nature’s great miracles.

Wild salmon are the centre of First Nations cultures across British Columbia and they continue to play an essential role both nutritionally and spiritually. Without salmon there are no community feasts.

Wild salmon have also played an important historic and ongoing role in BC’s economy. The first salmon commercially exported from the province were caught by Indigenous fishers and sold to the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Langley, in 1829. The company bought 7,544 salmon that year and 15,000 the next year. The fish were salted and shipped in barrels overseas, launching an industry that exists to this day with some \$640 million in annual sales and more than 9,400 people employed in jobs related to the wild salmon fishery.

But the future of these economically important and environmentally vital species is not bright.

Overfishing, habitat damage, the effects of drugs and pesticides that have contaminated the water, and the ongoing impact of climate change have made stocks unstable. There are also concerns about how aquaculture may be transferring pathogens between farmed and wild fish and how hatcheries are impacting wild stocks by increasing competition for food and by increasing fishing pressure.

Although there have been some good spawning returns in recent decades the overall trend for most stocks is not good. The Fraser, for example, is the largest river and producer of salmon in the province, and yet its stocks have fallen dramatically at times, raising deep concerns.

In 2009 the Fraser's sockeye run hit a low of 1.6 million sockeye, when nearly 10 million had been expected. In 2010 there was a big run of 28 million sockeye. But then in 2016 the Fraser collapsed again, with just 853,000 sockeye coming back to spawn – the lowest return in over 100 years.

Salmon return to spawn on different cycles (i.e. sockeye come back every four years, pinks every two) and some cycle years are naturally smaller than others. But wild swings in numbers indicate growing instability and declines over repeated years quickly lead to crisis. Some Fraser stocks, including Cultus Lake sockeye and Thompson/Chilco steelhead, are now so low in numbers they are considered endangered species.

DFO's 2018 salmon outlook for BC states that of 91 different groupings of salmon, only 28 are "expected to be at or above the amount necessary for a healthy population."

It is natural for salmon stocks to fluctuate in abundance over time. But it is not natural that so many runs of salmon are failing, or that the mean size and age of some species, notably Chinook, are declining. Smaller salmon and fewer salmon are trends that British Columbians simply can't tolerate.

Many of the problems faced by salmon exist, at least in part, because of federal fishery policies. Under the Fisheries Act, for example, licensed fish farms are allowed to deposit harmful substances directly into the ocean. This includes waste water contaminated with piscine reovirus (PRV) which is potentially fatal to wild salmon. DFO has also contributed to the decline of some stocks by allowing commercial fisheries to take place when endangered species are migrating through fishing areas. Steelhead, for example, are often accidentally killed during chum fisheries.

Our rivers should be full of wild salmon. Instead, runs are often so low that aboriginal, sport and commercial fishing opportunities are curtailed, while killer whales, grizzly bears and other species go hungry. This year for the first time DFO has proposed measures to make more Chinook salmon available as prey to an endangered population of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW). Without salmon the SRKW, now down to just 76 individuals, could blink out.

Salmon are managed from Ottawa by the department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. But salmon are the lifeblood of the province and BC needs to be more involved in decisions concerning this iconic species.

The current crisis facing salmon is complex but it is a problem that can and must be tackled. BC needs to have a salmon agenda – one that sets the province's goals and priorities for wild salmon.

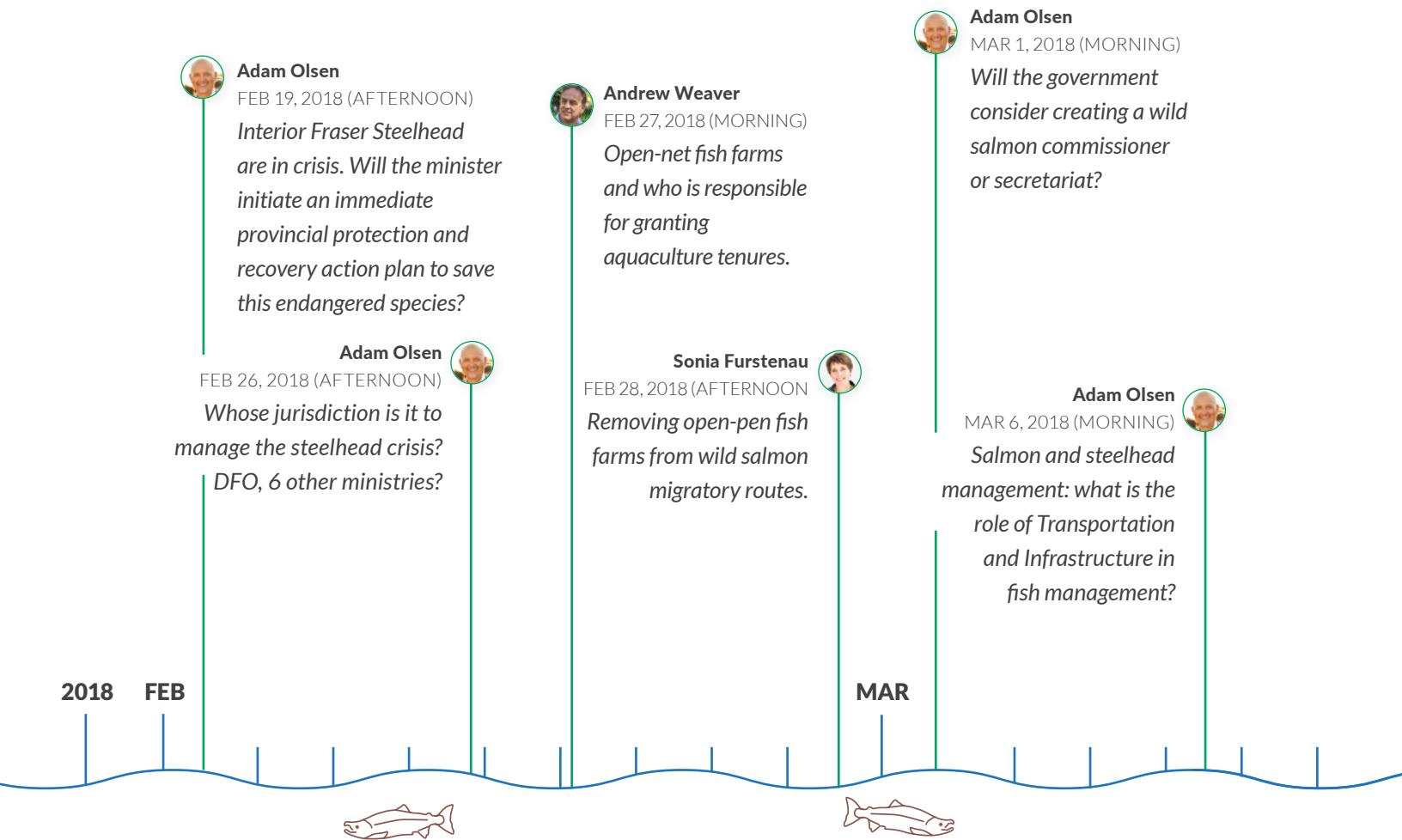
It is in the interest of all British Columbians that we speak out in the interest of salmon.



IF BRITISH COLUMBIANS DON'T
STAND UP FOR WILD SALMON, WHO WILL?

TONY ALLARD,
PRESIDENT OF HEARTHSTONE INVESTMENTS AND CHAIR OF *WILD SALMON FOREVER*

IN THE HOUSE



During the current sitting of the legislature when Green Party MLAs repeatedly raised salmon and steelhead issues. It is thought to be the first time in the legislature that a party has made salmon such a significant focus of questions. Green Party leader Andrew Weaver, representing Oak Bay Gordon Head, Saanich North and the Islands MLA Adam Olsen, and Cowichan Valley MLA Sonia Furstenau all asked the government about fishery issues during Question Period and estimates.



"We are pressing the government for change on a file that has for far too long been pushed aside," said Weaver. "But although we've asked a lot of important questions, we haven't got a lot of answers."

"If anything, this week we've seen how disorganized and confusing the jurisdictional responsibilities are for salmon and steelhead issues, even within a single government," said Furstenau,

before reading from a 2007 report by a special legislative committee supported by the NDP. That report called on the government to take immediate action to minimize the negative impacts of fish farms and to enhance wild salmon populations.

"We have enough reports. Given the severe threats to wild salmon, what, concretely, is your government going to do differently to protect this foundation species?" asked Furstenau.

"I want to say that the member does raise valid points," replied FLNRO Minister Doug Donaldson. But he didn't promise to do anything beyond consulting First Nations.

Olsen questioned the government about dramatic declines in Chilcotin and Thompson steelhead stocks, which the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife of Canada has recently declared are at imminent risk of extinction.



Donaldson replied that there "was a lack of focus by the previous government on wild salmon and steelhead and a lack of action by the previous federal government."

But he didn't say what his government will do about it and instead shifted the responsibility back to Ottawa.

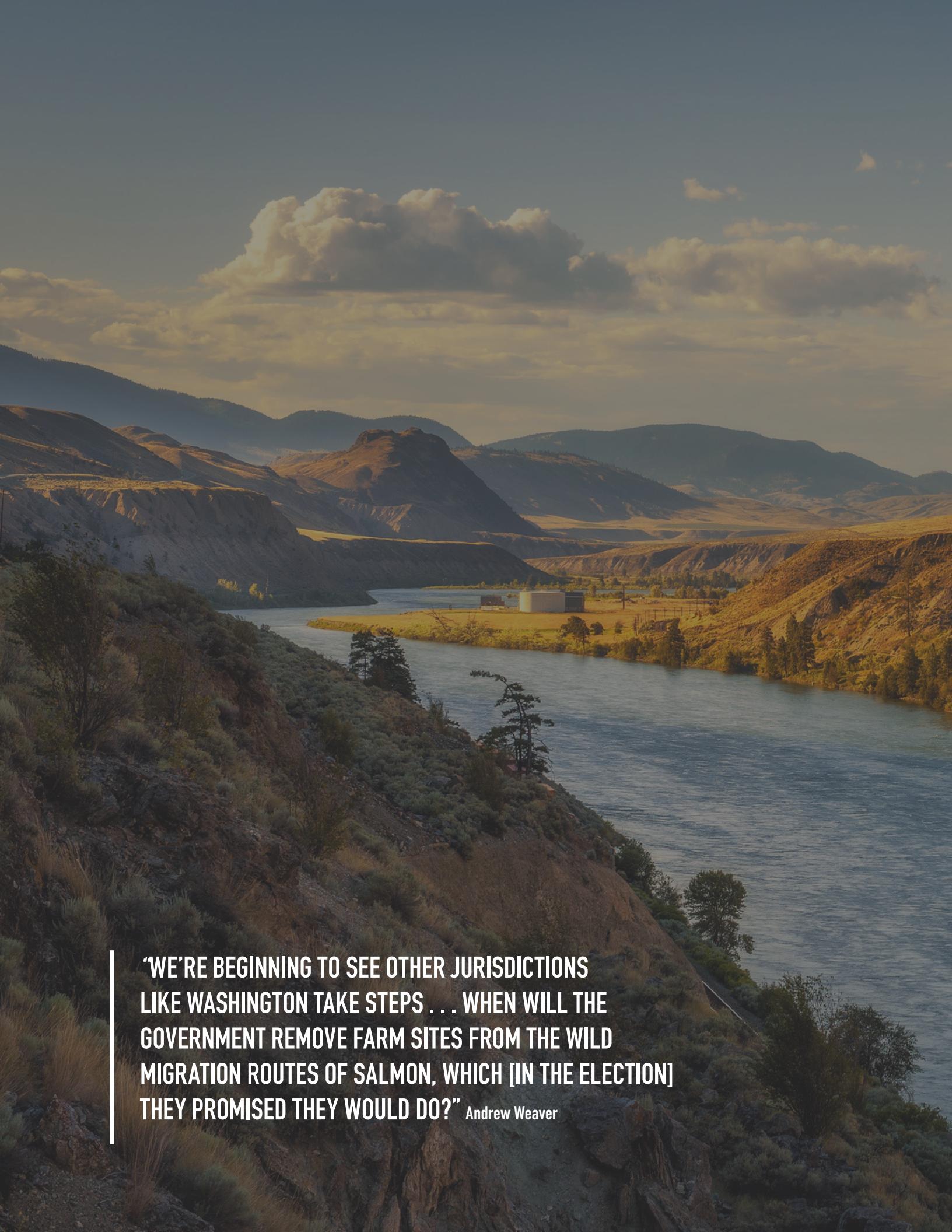
Said Olsen later: "I'm tired of hearing DFO is responsible for BC's salmon. It is our responsibility as British Columbians to protect that resource. We can't just stand by while Ottawa continues to pursue policies that put our wild stocks at risk."

"Every question we asked this week was about steelhead and wild salmon. We haven't received straight answers to our questions," he said "I don't doubt this government's commitment to wild salmon, but I wonder about their ability to make concrete changes when it appears it is being managed off the side of everyone's desk."

Then he asked the Premier: "Will your government consider creating a wild salmon commissioner or secretariat to unite and streamline the work being done by government to protect our wild salmon and steelhead relatives?"

Replied Horgan: "He has, I think, characterized fairly effectively the challenge that all of us have in British Columbia with co-management of our iconic salmon species, whether they be steelhead, whether they be chum, whether they be chinook, sockeye and the like. But that challenge didn't just arrive, as you know, and that challenge will take some time to figure out."

"We've heard a lot of words spoken this week. What we're proposing, with the line of questioning and with the suggestion that I made in my initial question, is action," Olsen said in the House.

A wide-angle photograph of a river valley at sunset or sunrise. The river flows from the background towards the foreground, reflecting the warm light. On either side of the river are steep, rocky hills covered in sparse vegetation. In the far distance, a range of mountains is visible under a sky filled with large, billowing clouds.

**'WE'RE BEGINNING TO SEE OTHER JURISDICTIONS
LIKE WASHINGTON TAKE STEPS . . . WHEN WILL THE
GOVERNMENT REMOVE FARM SITES FROM THE WILD
MIGRATION ROUTES OF SALMON, WHICH [IN THE ELECTION]
THEY PROMISED THEY WOULD DO?"**

Andrew Weaver

A wide-angle photograph of a river flowing through a rugged, hilly landscape. The hills are covered in dry, golden-brown vegetation and some sparse evergreen trees. The river water is a deep blue-grey, reflecting the light. In the background, more hills and mountains are visible under a clear, pale sky.

"IF ANYTHING, THIS WEEK WE'VE SEEN HOW DISORGANIZED AND CONFUSING THE JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES ARE FOR SALMON AND STEELHEAD ISSUES, EVEN WITHIN A SINGLE GOVERNMENT."

Sonia Furstenau

WILD SALMON SECRETARIAT INPUT FORUM

A photograph of a lush, green forest. In the foreground, large, light-colored rocks are scattered across a rocky stream bed, many of them covered in vibrant green moss. The water is shallow and reflects the surrounding environment. In the background, numerous tall trees stand, their trunks heavily draped in thick, bright green moss. The overall atmosphere is one of a pristine, natural ecosystem.

A photograph of a lush, green forest. In the foreground, there's a rocky stream bed with water flowing over rocks. The trees are tall and thin, many covered in bright green moss. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

On April 20th, 2018, the proposal to create a Wild Salmon Secretariat in British Columbia was pushed forward by a special forum organized by MLA Adam Olsen that brought together a wide range of stakeholder groups. Representatives of First Nations, fish and wildlife organizations, conservation groups, non-profit advocacy agencies and a commercial fishing union met in Vancouver to discuss how the province could play a more effective role in the management of wild salmon.

The goal of the forum was to provide MLA Olsen input from relevant salmon organizations, as he works with government on the potential mandate for a Wild Salmon Secretariat or Commissioner.

At the conference there was unanimous support for the proposal to establish a Wild Salmon Secretariat or appoint a Wild Salmon Commissioner to serve as a unifying force to streamline all the fisheries work being done within the BC government and to be a strong defender of wild salmon in negotiations with the federal government. From this point of agreement, each organization brought their own perspective to the discussion about how it could best be structured – whether within government or an external body – and what its mandate should be.

Salmon are largely a federal responsibility, but several speakers at the forum highlighted the province's responsibility for watersheds. Salmon are vitally important to British Columbians, they said, and the province should prioritize their wellbeing.

The majority of participants also relayed frustration in trying to deal with the provincial government on salmon issues, having been passed from department to department because there was no single ministry in charge of the file.

Tony Allard President of Hearthstone Investments and Chair of a group called Wild Salmon Forever, said a lot of organizations are working independently on salmon issues and a Wild Salmon Secretariat could help unify those efforts.

"If British Columbians don't stand up for wild salmon, who will?" he said.

Al Martin, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the BC Wildlife Federation, said it is clear a different approach to restoring wild salmon is needed in BC

"Having a point person for leadership in terms of salmon is important," he said, but the role and objectives of a Wild Salmon Secretariat need to be clarified.

Dr. Brian Riddell, President and CEO of the Pacific Salmon Foundation, said the idea of a Wild Salmon Secretariat has his full support.

"We need leadership, a champion for wild salmon," he said. **"We really need a spokesperson from the province to interact with the feds."**

Riddell noted that the *Wild Salmon Policy*, formulated in 2005 by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, has never been implemented. He suggested a Wild Salmon Secretariat could adopt that policy and push for it to be acted on.

Participants at the forum discussed how a Secretariat might be structured and what its mandate might be.

Joy Thorkelson, President of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union said they are looking for a wild salmon champion for BC, but that the structure of a Wild Salmon Secretariat would need to be clearly defined.

She said such an organization could be guided by a committee or board with representatives from around the province and must work to **"balance the interests"** of a wide array of groups.

Craig Orr, representing Watershed Watch Society, said it is crucial to **"understand the mandate of what you are setting up."**

But he cautioned about trying too hard to hard to please everyone.

"When we try to balance all competing interests, wild fish are the losers. When we put wild fish first, long-term benefits flow to all interests."

With six different provincial ministries, in addition to DFO federally, involved in the management of salmon and steelhead though proactive protection is very rarely achieve. These ministries (the Ministry of Environment being the exception) all have mandates to advance development that is detrimental to salmon. They are tasked with mitigating damage where possible, but it is not the priority. In addition, no one in government is tracking the cumulative impact of all these activities. Even if each ministry only has a moderate impact on fish habitat, it can add up to salmon being hit at every stage of their

development: spawning grounds are constrained by municipal expansion, streams are channeled under roads, rivers are polluted with agricultural runoff, watersheds are logged causing waterways to cloud with silt and get too hot, migratory routes are lined with fish farms... No one in government is taking the perspective of the salmon.

Many people spoke about the need to shift away from “management” towards restoration and recovery, noting we are currently managing species into decline.

We need to rebuild populations, they said, which is no easy task. It is more expensive and challenging to fix an ecosystem in crisis, they said, than protect ecosystems from being damaged in the first place.

As **Les Bogdan**, Director of Regional Operations for Ducks Unlimited, said, “**We are planning nature to death.**”

Noting a Wild Salmon Secretariat could instigate action, Bogdan said, “**We have so many plans, it is time to implement them. We have to move ahead and do it.**”

People spoke about how it was the first time representatives from groups who once clashed over salmon were now sitting at the same table discussing how they share common goals.

Having such diverse groups unified on the need for a Wild Salmon Secretariat or Commissioner was seen as a very promising start.

Owen Bird, Executive Director of the Sport Fishing Institute of BC, said it “**would be fantastic**” to have a powerful voice speaking about the province’s salmon interests.

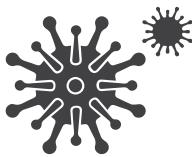
“**It is very encouraging and heartening,**” he said of the common interests around the forum table. “**There is a definite need for a Salmon Secretariat.**”

FORUM PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

- **First Nations Fisheries Council**
- **Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance**
- **Pacific Salmon Foundation**
- **BC Wildlife Federation**
- **Ducks Unlimited**
- **Wild Salmon Forever**
- **Watershed Watch Society**
- **Raincoast Conservation Foundation**
- **BC Conservation Foundation**
- **Nature Trust of BC**
- **United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union**
- **BC Fishing Resorts and Outfitter Association**
- **Sport Fishing Institute of BC**
- **Special Advisor to the Premier**

RECOMMENDATION

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S SALMON POPULATIONS FACING COMPOUNDING THREATS LIKE NEVER BEFORE.



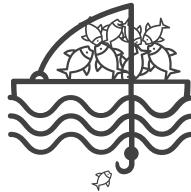
DISEASE



HABITAT DESTRUCTION



CLIMATE CHANGE



OVERFISHING

The one thing all of these have in common is a lack of government leadership at either the federal or provincial level. It's time the provincial government did something about it. The BC Greens are calling for a centralized representative for wild salmon and recommend government appoint a Wild Salmon Commissioner and supporting secretariat.

A Wild Salmon Commissioner and Secretariat would:

- Serve as a unifying force in the provincial government to see the big picture and ensure that all the fisheries work being done within the BC government is aligned towards a consistent, positive outcome.
- Be a strong defender of wild salmon in negotiations with the federal government
- Be a champion for wild salmon who can work to address threats and begin to rebuild declining stocks.



This representative and its supporting secretariat would coordinate the work being done within the provincial government and to be a strong advocate for salmon federally. While the decision making authority must remain with the Minister(s) and the policy work within the ministries, a salmon commissioner would ensure the overarching objectives for wild salmon are properly weighted in decision making.

STRUCTURE



Adequate funding and strong connection to government - At a fundamental level, the commissioner and secretariat must have enough funding and connection to government to have a meaningful impact. The BC Green Caucus believes the most effective approach would be to have a Wild Salmon Commissioner and Secretariat appointed within the Premier's office. Consideration was given to having an external salmon commissioner, operating at arm's length from government, but we think direct connection to the Premier would be advantageous given their role in ensuring government's wild salmon objectives are accomplished in a coordinated manner across ministries.



Strong First Nations connection - Any structure must reflect the inherent importance salmon have within Indigenous communities and allow the commissioner and secretariat to be guided by traditional knowledge. This would ensure a balanced approach in restoring BC's relationship with wild salmon. One alternative idea was to appoint two joint commissioners, one of whom should be First Nations. Whether or not this option is chosen it is critical that First Nations and their corresponding rights and title are entrenched in the decision making process on this file.



Urgency - The commissioner should be appointed by Summer 2018. The crisis we are facing requires urgent action. Returns of Fraser River sockeye are critically low, populations of chinook, coho, and steelhead are struggling. Some runs are on the brink of extinction. The sooner we act, the better our opportunity for recovery will be.

MANDATE

Community buy-in and engagement

Their first order of business, to be completed over the first few months, could be to strike an external advisory/oversight board with members from all regions of the province and all major stakeholders. This strategy would allow for immediate political leadership, coordination of existing salmon initiatives within government, and the creation of a more robust, long term plan to ensure the work continues beyond election cycles.

Restoring wild salmon populations

The mandate should focus on increasing wild salmon populations by addressing the cumulative impacts that are affecting fish in our oceans, rivers and streams while restoring salmon habitat. This mandate would, in turn, begin to fix the disjointed approach to wild salmon management we currently have in within our provincial government. If done effectively, it would also begin to rebuild a thriving commercial wild salmon fishery in communities throughout our province.



Andrew Weaver
Leader
MLA, Oak Bay-Gordon Head



Sonia Furstenau
Deputy leader
MLA, Cowichan Valley



Adam Olsen
MLA, Saanich North
& the Islands

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