EVALUATION OF DFO's ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF PACIFIC SALMON

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted internally by the Evaluation Division of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and examined the relevance, design, delivery and effectiveness of DFO's activities related to the management of Pacific salmon. The evaluation applied a principles-focused approach[1] to assess the management of Pacific Salmon assuming that DFO's Pacific Region strives to achieve the principle of "**healthy and abundant salmon stocks**." The evaluation assessed the degree to which the principle is guiding, useful, inspiring, developmental and evaluable in relation to DFO's management levers. Evidence was gathered through interviews, document and literature review, financial and administrative data analysis, a survey of DFO staff and external stakeholders, and case studies.

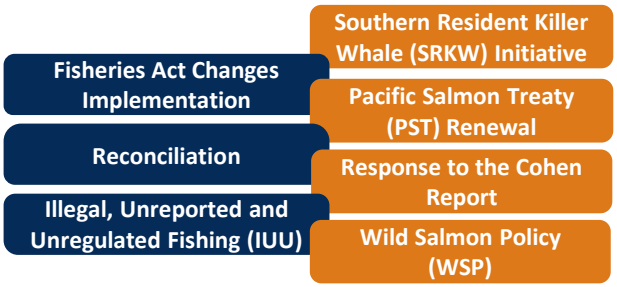
ABOUT DFO MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

DFO's activities in support of Pacific salmon are carried out across a multi-tiered national and regional program structure. Within this operational structure, DFO's activities in support of Pacific salmon are delivered via three management levers which are related to the species' **harvest** (i.e. fisheries management), **hatcheries** (i.e. enhancement for harvest and conservation purposes), and **habitat** (i.e. the restoration and protection of habitat). Although the use of these management levers has been overlaid onto DFO's existing operational structure, there is no one sector or program directly responsible for any of these levers. Instead, DFO's management levers are instruments used by the department to deliver on DFO's legislative requirements with regards to Pacific salmon through multiple programs.

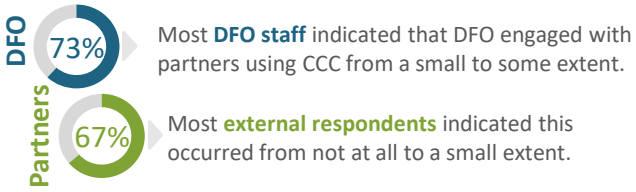
KEY FINDINGS

WHILE THE MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC SALMON IS RELEVANT AND ALIGNED WITH EXISTING ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHTS, PARTNERSHIPS CAN BE IMPROVED THROUGH CO-DESIGN, CO-DEVELOPMENT AND CO-DELIVERY

- Activities in support of Pacific salmon address ongoing needs since Pacific salmon stocks play an important role in Canada as a fisheries resource.
- Activities in support of Pacific salmon are aligned with existing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights, **Government of Canada priorities** and **Pacific Regional priorities**, including:



- Although feedback has been sought from Indigenous Peoples and remote communities in support of the planning and management of Pacific salmon programs over the past five years, Indigenous Peoples note that they do not always see their perspectives reflected in meaningful ways in the department's decision-making.
- The department can use co-design, co-development, and co-delivery (CCC) approaches to a greater extent within legislative parameters.



A CLEAR STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND VISION FOR PACIFIC SALMON IS NEEDED THROUGHOUT THE DEPARTMENT TO GUIDE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

- The principle of "healthy and abundant salmon stocks" does not provide consistent guidance to drive Pacific salmon management across the three management levers.
- Performance data related to Pacific salmon is tracked by multiple programs and branches within the department, oftentimes indirectly and without an overarching results framework that is salmon-specific. As a result, progress towards "healthy and abundant salmon stocks" is difficult to evaluate in the absence of an ultimate outcome for the management of Pacific salmon.

1. Michael Quinn Patton. 2018. Principles-focused evaluation : the guide. New York, NY : The Guilford Press.

KEY FINDINGS

THE DEPARTMENT TENDS TO FOCUS MORE ON THE HARVEST MANAGEMENT LEVER AS A RESULT OF ITS BROADER MANDATE. HOWEVER, IN THE CASE OF PACIFIC SALMON, ALL THREE MANAGEMENT LEVERS NEED TO BE ACTED UPON

- Overall, the evaluation found there is a need to improve the alignment, integration, collaboration and communication between those implementing that Pacific Region activities across the **harvest, hatcheries** and **habitat** management levers.
- The evaluation also found evidence of greater consideration towards **harvest** management activities than towards the other management levers. In contrast, management activities related to Pacific salmon habitat tend to be the most disconnected from the remaining levers.
- However, Pacific salmon are unique in that the various management levers have influence over different stages of a Pacific salmon's complex migration and lifecycle. Therefore, activities in support of Pacific salmon require integrated action on all three levers.

Collaboration

There is an overall lack of collaboration between the three levers

When survey respondents were asked to rate the level of collaboration between the management levers, collaboration between **hatcheries** and **harvest** was rated the highest, potentially because hatcheries' production objectives support harvest activities, while habitat and **harvest** was rated the weakest.

Alignment

DFO's management levers are not clearly aligned.

Clear alignment is perceived as strongest between **harvest** and **hatcheries** levers and weakest between **harvest** and **habitat**.

Communication

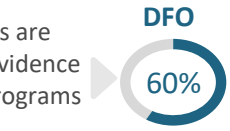
There is an overall lack of communication between the three levers

When survey respondents were asked to rate the level of communication between the levers, communication was rated strongest between the **hatcheries** and **harvest** levers and weakest between **habitat** and **harvest**.

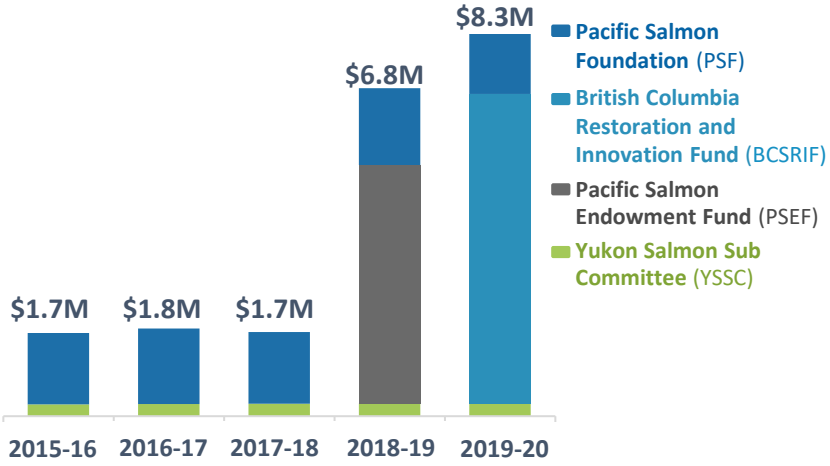
GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF PACIFIC SALMON ARE INCREASING AND WOULD BENEFIT FROM A COORDINATED APPROACH

- Numerous DFO transfer payment programs, such as grants and contributions (G&C) programs exist within DFO to directly and indirectly support activities related to Pacific salmon.
- G&C programs for activities in support of Pacific salmon lack a coordinated approach that is aligned with the departmental strategic direction and vision for the species. For this reason, G&C programs are often proposal driven as opposed to clearly linked to objectives supporting Pacific salmon.
- As a result, there are opportunities for the department to take a proactive approach to achieve Pacific salmon objectives.
- With budgets increasing, the need for a coordinated approach is even more critical to ensure DFO obtains the greatest possible impact from departmental investments in support of Pacific salmon.

While most **DFO staff** agree that transfer payments are appropriate to support the three levers, evaluation evidence points to a lack of a coordinated approach for G&C programs in support of Pacific salmon.



DFO spending ($ millions) under G&C programs directly linked to Pacific salmon has increased from 2015-16 to 2019-20



KEY FINDINGS

TRACKING RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION BY SPECIES IS NOT ROUTINE PRACTICE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT, THEREFORE THE DECENTRALIZED NATURE OF ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF PACIFIC SALMON LEADS TO CHALLENGES IN TRACKING

- Due to the decentralized nature of activities in support of Pacific salmon, financial, human and material resources as well as performance information are difficult to track.
- DFO does not have an internal mechanism to systematically track all resources associated with Pacific salmon. Proxies for tracking, such as FTE-time spent on Pacific salmon activities, have been used in the past to identify resources. However, similar exercises were not deemed feasible based on time and effort constraints associated with them at the operational level.
- Likewise, performance data are difficult to evaluate because they are widely linked to the various regional activities, DFO programs and management levers that deliver on activities in support of Pacific salmon. As a result, performance information is difficult to integrate and report on across these multiple channels, particularly at the species-level.

Different options are available to track resources and results within the department:

Resources To improve estimates of resources allocated to Pacific salmon, DFO can:	**Results** To help inform performance measurement and reporting, DFO can:
A) Continue status quo of high-level costing exercises. **B)** Apply consistent departmental tracking methodologies. **C)** Use a single reporting structure. **D)** Use project codes to allocate costs by species directly in DFO's SAP financial system	**A)** Introduce species-level tracking within DFO's program inventory. **B)** Implement tracking through the departmental priority tracking process. **C)** Create a unique Salmon Program in DFO's Program Inventory that includes a Program Inventory Profile (PIP).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The management of Pacific salmon is complex due to its cross-cutting nature, reaching across multiple programs, branches, and sectors and linking issues specific to the Pacific Region with other national priorities. There are also a number of external factors that affect the management of Pacific salmon, not all of which are within the department's control. In this complex model, there is a need for a unified approach as the department is currently operating without a clear strategic direction and vision to guide activities in support of Pacific salmon.

A foundational strategic direction and vision for Pacific salmon

Recommendation #1: Develop a strategic direction and vision for Pacific salmon

It is recommended that the Regional Director General, Pacific Region and the Executive Head, Pacific Salmon Strategy Transformation, in collaboration with the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Fisheries and Harbour Management, the Assistant Deputy Minister Aquatic Ecosystems, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy and the Assistant Deputy Minister Ecosystems and Oceans Science create a clearly defined and unified **strategic direction and vision for the management of Pacific salmon** that can be implemented across the department and communicated to internal and external stakeholders.

Tools in support of Pacific salmon's strategic direction and vision

Recommendation #2: Implement a coordinated approach for transfer payments that is aligned with the strategic direction and vision for Pacific salmon

It is recommended that the Regional Director General, Pacific Region, in collaboration with the Executive Head, Pacific Salmon Strategy Transformation, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Fisheries and Harbour Management, the Assistant Deputy Minister Aquatic Ecosystems, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy, the Assistant Deputy Minister Ecosystems and Oceans Science and the Chief Financial Officer implement a **coordinated approach for transfer payment programs supporting Pacific salmon that is aligned with the departmental strategic direction and vision.**

Recommendation #3: Implement tools and methodologies to track resources in support of Pacific salmon

It is recommended that the Regional Director General, Pacific Region, in collaboration with the Executive Head, Pacific Salmon Strategy Transformation, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Fisheries and Harbour Management, the Assistant Deputy Minister Aquatic Ecosystems, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy, the Assistant Deputy Minister Ecosystems and Oceans Science and the Chief Financial Officer leverage internal tools and methodologies to **improve the financial tracking of activities related to the management of Pacific salmon.**

Recommendation #4: Implement a performance measurement strategy for activities in support of Pacific salmon

It is recommended that the Regional Director General, Pacific Region and the Head of Performance Measurement in collaboration with the Executive Head, Pacific Salmon Strategy Transformation the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Fisheries and Harbour Management, the Assistant Deputy Minister Aquatic Ecosystems, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy and the Assistant Deputy Minister Ecosystems and Oceans Science develop and implement a **performance measurement strategy for activities in support of Pacific salmon** that is consistent with the department's strategic direction and vision for Pacific salmon and that clearly identifies the department's expected results.

Recommendation #5: Clearly define the governance framework for departmental activities in support of Pacific salmon

It is recommended that the Executive Head, Pacific Salmon Strategy Transformation in collaboration with the Regional Director General, Pacific Region, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Fisheries and Harbour Management, the Assistant Deputy Minister Aquatic Ecosystems, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy and the Assistant Deputy Minister Ecosystems and Oceans Science **implement a clearly defined governance framework for activities in support of Pacific salmon that is consistent with the department's strategic direction and vision** for Pacific salmon and that clearly identifies roles and responsibilities across DFO programs at the regional and national level.