Common questions about the Protect Pacific Herring campaign

*We do not intend this to be a comprehensive analysis or response to the Pacific Herring issue and encourage everyone to do your own research, form your own opinions and voice them to the Federal Government encouraging sustainable fisheries management.

** More information about the campaign can be found at https://pacificwild.org/

Q: The herring have returned to the coast in great abundance. This year the Strait had one of the biggest spawns in recent history. How can you say the herring are declining?

A: Reports from fishers affirm this perception. However, the data that has been presented in recent DFO reports does not support this statement. In 2019, the projected biomass for herring in the Strait of Georgia was 123,000 tons but only 64,000 tons actually returned. This year, the projected level was at 54,000 tons. The downward trend in population is concerning and it’s important that these fish stocks are given a chance to recover.

The Federal Government has not entrenched an ecosystem approach to management nor established alternative harvest control rules so, taking a precautionary, long-term, approach to fishery management in order to ensure both the ecological sustainability and economic stability of the fishery, modest harvest rates are being recommended for the Strait of Georgia.

Background Resource(s):
- Integrated Fisheries Management Plan 2019/2020, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Integrated Herring Harvest Planning Committee (IHHPC)

Q: Pacific Wild’s campaign is based off of emotion and not facts. Where are the data?

A: All of the data pertaining to population dynamics that Pacific Wild shares is taken directly from academic sources, reputable news publications, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s own reports/documents. The organization works hard to ensure all the data communicated in its campaign are accurate and up-to-date.

Background Resource(s):
- Integrated Fisheries Management Plan 2017/18, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Herring Conservation and Research Society
Pacific Wild is also currently compiling a report and annotated bibliography of herring research, including management, biology, diet, historic abundance, and interactions with other species in the food web, which will summarize in detail the current available research for those who are interested.

Q: Is Pacific Wild and Persephone Brewing anti-fishery? Do you support closing the fishery indefinitely?

A: No, the fishery is recognized as an important part of the provincial economy, cultural heritage and peoples’ livelihoods, and therefore, should be protected today and for the future. Herring play a key role in both the coastal ecosystem and the livelihoods of harvesters. Over the years, four of the five herring fisheries have been closed due to population concerns but the management structure from DFO has not changed. We support a more precautionary approach to the management of this fishery - one that allows time for stocks to rebuild and prosper so fishing can take place for generations to come.

DFO has, thus far, demonstrated that they will not close the fishery voluntarily, instead choosing to allow populations to decline to critical levels, leaving the onus on coastal people and communities. Of the four fisheries that were closed, three were closed due to legal action by First Nations after DFO failed to acknowledge the advice of the Nations and their own scientists.

The Federal Government is the primary target of the Protect Pacific Herring campaign – not the fishing industry or individuals that comprise it. The campaign is intended to compel the government toward entrenching an ecosystem based approach to management and alternative harvest control rules, in addition to policy and regulations that protect both the fish, associated ecosystem linkages and communities that rely on them.

Background Resource(s):
- DFO sets Salish Sea herring harvest rate at 20 per cent, Vic News, Jan 2020
- Toward a “low risk” ecosystem based Pacific herring fishery, David Suzuki Foundation, November 2019
- Petition to the Government of Canada, March 2020

Q: The herring fishery is beneficial to the BC economy. Why would you want it to stop?

A: Agreed, herring contribute to British Columbia’s economy by feeding other species as well as by being caught and processed. Many of the fish species that eat herring support other commercial and sport fisheries. In 2016, B.C. commercial fisheries for salmon,
halibut, and hake were worth $62.9 million, $64 million, and $18.3 million in landed value, respectively. In the same year, the landed value of the commercial herring fishery was just $15.6 million (only 4.4% of the total value of the commercial fishing in B.C.). In 2016, the B.C. sport fishing industry employed 9,000 people, who earned $236.5 million in income. The estimated number of people employed by the herring fishery was 500. Similarly, tourism is bolstered by this fish stock, for example, the whale populations that rely on herring, like humpbacks and orcas, draw hundreds of thousands of tourists to B.C. Whale watching generates approximately $250 million per year in economic impact. Applying a cautionary principle to herring fishery management now protects all of these important components of our provincial economy for the future.

Background Resource(s):

Q: Is Pacific Wild a for-profit business with individual shareholders profiting from the campaigns such as the Protect Pacific Herring campaign? Who funds Pacific Wild? Are there any corporate interests influencing the Pacific Wild agenda?

A: Pacific Wild is a not-for-profit Registered Canadian Charity. To function, the organization relies on donations from individuals, foundations and conservation-minded business partners who support and share its mission to be the leading voice for wildlife conservation within the boundaries of the Great Bear Rainforest and throughout the Pacific Northwest. Pacific Wild does not receive any funding from major corporations.

Background Resource:
- [CRA Charities Directorate Listing, Canada Revenue Agency, Government of Canada](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca)