

# AREA F HARVEST COMMITTEE

bcntaadvisors@northernrollers.bc.ca

## 2026 Area F Salmon Fishery Proposal

Submitted by: Area F Harvest Committee

Date: February 4, 2026

Dear Mr. Hawkshaw and Mr. Radford,

### Executive Summary

The Area F troll fishery is a modern, selectively operated and intensively monitored offshore Chinook troll fishery with demonstrated low impacts on Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern. The fleet operates under 100% dockside monitoring, daily logbooks, quota controls, and long-running DNA and coded-wire tag (CWT) programs that enable precise, responsive management.

Since 2019, Area F has demonstrated sustained reductions in encounters with Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern, consistent with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) conservation objectives. Independent DFO analyses confirm that North Coast commercial troll fisheries contribute only a minor proportion of total Fraser Chinook mortality and are not constraining rebuilding outcomes.

This proposal requests a set of targeted 2026 fisheries that align access with demonstrated conservation performance, abundance indicators, and proportionality principles embedded in DFO's Outlook-based planning framework.

### Proposed Area F Fisheries for 2026

#### 1. July 1 A–B Line Pink Salmon Directed Fishery

Area F requests a July 1 opening for a directed pink salmon fishery with continuation of the expanded Area 103 eastern boundary. This configuration improves safety, supports participation by the ice-boat fleet, and enhances access for Northern First Nations, while maintaining selective harvest practices.

#### 2. August 10 – September 30 Chinook Opening

Area F requests an August 10 opening for Chinook retention, consistent with stock composition, historical management precedent, and recent conservation performance.

#### Alignment with Outlook and Proportionality

The Fraser River Chinook Fishery Mortality Index (2014–2024) shows that Outlook-informed management measures implemented since 2019 have resulted in substantial and sustained reductions in fishery-related mortality on Fraser Chinook stocks of concern,

# AREA F HARVEST COMMITTEE

bcntaadvisors@northernrollers.bc.ca

particularly Spring 4<sub>2</sub> and Spring 5<sub>2</sub> Chinook.

Within this context, commercial/EO fisheries on the North Coast, including Area F troll fisheries, consistently contribute a low proportion of total Fraser Chinook mortality relative to other fishing sectors. These results support the application of proportionate, performance-based access adjustments under abundance-planning frameworks where conservation indicators are being met.

DFO previously implemented an August 10 Chinook retention date for Area F in 2022, reflecting an assessment that Fraser Chinook risk had declined sufficiently to allow limited retention consistent with Outlook guidance. In 2023, a later opening on August 16 resulted in significant foregone opportunity without evidence of additional conservation benefit. Recognized FMI uncertainties do not alter this conclusion.

### 3. Directed Coho Opportunities

Recent DFO stock assessment information indicates that key Northern Boundary Coho indicators in 2025 were strong and, in some systems, exceeded established biological escapement goal bounds. For example, the Ketchikan Index reported a final escapement of 19,626, described as the fifth highest count on record, with biological escapement goal bounds of 4,250 (lower) and 8,500 (upper).

In addition, post-season material reports a Skeena River total escapement of 106,013 across Lower, Middle, and Upper Skeena components, with uncertainty expressed through component-level coefficients of variation. These results support advancing discussion of proportionate, performance-based fishing opportunity for Area F when abundance indicators meet or exceed management benchmarks.

To ensure any directed opportunity remains aligned with conservation objectives and uncertainty management, Area F proposes that DFO consider a time- and area-bounded, selective coho pilot only under conditions where validated indicator information supports surplus relative to agreed benchmarks, and harvest is managed with explicit constraints (e.g., conservative quotas, in-season check-ins, and rapid closure provisions).

Area F further notes that DFO is strengthening the analytical foundation for Northern Boundary Coho, including a completed NBC coho genetic baseline (with more than 7,000 samples added since 2021), and ongoing work on mixed-stock analysis and minimum sample size design for Area F Troll fisheries, with reporting of 2019–2025 GSI results anticipated in Fall 2026. These initiatives provide a clear pathway to reduce uncertainty over time while maintaining a precautionary, stepwise approach.

# AREA F HARVEST COMMITTEE

bcntaadvisors@northernrollers.bc.ca

## 4. Area 3 Terminal Coho Fishery

Area F supports the implementation of an Area 3 terminal coho fishery contingent on Nass River fish wheel indicators. This opportunity supports local First Nations, including Lax Kw'alaams, and aligns with regionally responsive management objectives.

## Conservation Performance and Monitoring

The Area F fleet operates with rigorous monitoring and validation requirements, including 100% dockside monitoring, daily electronic logbooks, quota controls, and long-running DNA and CWT sampling programs. These programs provide DFO with high-resolution stock composition and encounter data, enabling timely in-season management adjustments and ensuring that conservation objectives are met.

## Conclusion

Area F's 2026 proposal reflects a science-based, proportionate approach to salmon management that aligns access with demonstrated conservation performance. The requested fisheries are consistent with DFO's Outlook and abundance planning principles and support the continued viability of a low-impact, well-monitored commercial troll fleet that contributes meaningfully to coastal economies and food systems.

Sincerely,

Area F Harvest Committee

Chris Acheson, Mark Fredheim, Jon Hunter, David MacKay, Stuart Malcolm, Steve Martinelli, Lawrence Paulson, and Mike Wells.

Cc Bradley Koroluk

Patrick Fairweather