

Jon Hunter
Area F Harvest Committee Representative
VP of the BC Northern Trollers Association

May 22, 2026

The Honourable Joanne Thompson, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

Re: Request for Meeting – Area F Salmon Management Measures and Conservation Consistency for 2026

Dear Minister Thompson,

I am writing on behalf of the Area F salmon troll fleet to respectfully request a meeting with you and your senior officials regarding current Chinook salmon management measures affecting northern commercial and Indigenous fisheries.

The Area F troll fleet represents one of Canada's last small-boat, community-based fisheries. We operate using highly selective and sustainable hook-and-line gear, supported by rigorous monitoring through DNA and coded-wire-tag (CWT) sampling, electronic logbooks, and dockside validation. Our fleet has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to responsible harvesting, conservation, and collaborative fisheries management.

Area F recognizes and respects that conservation and First Nations Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) fisheries must remain the highest priorities in salmon management. Many neighbouring First Nations communities and harvesters also participate directly in the commercial fishery and have experienced significant reductions in fishing opportunity and food access in support of conservation objectives over recent years.

Given these sacrifices, we believe it is important that management measures demonstrably contribute to conservation outcomes, increased escapement, and improved FSC opportunity.

The purpose of this meeting request is to discuss whether the current August 10–16 north coast Chinook closure is effectively achieving its intended objectives, particularly in light of proposed downstream fisheries that may intercept Fraser-bound Chinook closer to the Fraser River approach during terminal migration periods.

As illustrated in the attached figures, between 2014–2018 and 2019–2023, the Northern BC commercial troll fleet reduced its harvest of Fraser River Chinook stocks of concern by more than 85% (from an annual average of approximately 26,376 fish to 3,974 fish). During the same period, total recreational harvest impacts on these same Fraser stocks increased overall.

Area F believes these trends raise important questions regarding how conservation measures are being applied across fisheries and whether current management approaches are reducing overall fishery mortality or redistributing interception spatially and temporally.

In particular, we respectfully request discussion regarding the rationale supporting the proposed September 1 recreational Chinook opening in Areas 29-3 and 29-4 while maintaining the August 10–16 closure on the north coast.

Chinook migrating from Langara Island to the Fraser River approach travel approximately 800–1,000 kilometres. At estimated marine migration rates of 25–40 kilometres per day, fish passing Langara between August 10 and 16 would likely arrive near the Fraser River during the late-August to early-September period.

As a result, fish withheld from harvest in Area F during this period may still be intercepted in downstream marine fisheries operating in close proximity to the Fraser River approach before reaching spawning systems or FSC fisheries upstream.

Current observations suggest that Fraser-bound Chinook staging near the Fraser approach are subject to concentrated marine recreational fishing pressure during this period, while it remains unclear whether the August 10–16 closure is materially increasing availability for FSC fisheries within the Fraser system.

This raises important conservation and management questions regarding whether the intended biological benefits of the closure are being achieved.

Evidence from recent fisheries performance provides additional context:

- During the 2022 season, when Area F opened on August 10, total impacts on Fraser Summer 5(2) Chinook were extremely low (approximately 40 fish) based on the Fraser Chinook Fishery Mortality Index (FMI).
- Stock composition data indicates that approximately 70–80% of Chinook encountered in Area F during August are of U.S. origin, meaning most harvest during this period does not affect Fraser River stocks.
- In contrast, fisheries operating in Areas 29-3 and 29-4 occur in much closer proximity to the Fraser River approach and are understood to encounter a substantially higher proportion of Fraser-bound Chinook.

Taken together, this information suggests the need for a broader discussion regarding total fishery mortality across all sectors and whether current restrictions are being applied in a manner that is biologically effective, equitable, and consistent with conservation objectives.

Area F is not requesting that conservation standards be weakened. Rather, we are requesting an opportunity to discuss whether current management measures are appropriately aligned with

demonstrated stock impacts and whether a carefully managed August 10 opening could occur without materially affecting Fraser stocks of concern.

It should also be recognized that the eligible Area F licence base has declined substantially over the past several years, from approximately 243 licences to roughly 170 active eligible licences today, excluding licences retired through PICFI-related processes. This reduction has significantly decreased the fleet's harvesting capacity and economic viability.

Our objective is not conflict between sectors, but a constructive discussion regarding how management measures can best support conservation, FSC objectives, sustainable fisheries, and fairness across all sectors.

We respectfully request the opportunity to present this information directly and discuss potential solutions collaboratively with you and your officials.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to salmon conservation and reconciliation.

Respectfully,

Jon Hunter
Area F Salmon Troll Harvest Committee Representative
Vice-President, BC Northern Trollers Association

Attachments:

- Annotated Line Chart: Fraser Chinook Mortality Index (DFO data)
- Bar Chart: NBC Commercial vs SBC/NBC Recreational Catch Comparison
- Area F Salmon Proposal 2025
- Lax Kw'alaams Support Letter

Cc Jeff Grout
Mike Hawkshaw
Patrick Fairweather