

TAHLTAN ELDERS COUNCIL'S POSITION ON SUSPENSION OF FISHING FOR KING SALMON

We have been talking with our Tahltan Fisheries Department and they are telling us that the King Salmon run continues to be dangerously low. Last year we honored their request to not fish until most of the King Salmon run had past, as a result, we did not put our nets in until the long weekend in July. We were also asked to return any healthy Kings back into the river, which we did. We want to thank all Tahltans who respect the need to protect our dwindling King Salmon stock.

The Canadian and American organizations responsible for monitoring King Salmon have stopped all fishing for King Salmon. Our Tahltan Food Fishery is the only directed fishery that remains, and we are still harvesting a significant number of Kings when we fish for sockeye starting in early July.

The King Salmon stock is getting so low the Elders Council is concerned enough to ask our fisheries department to see what is involved in designating our King Salmon as an endangered species. This reduction in our King Salmon stock is a result of events that we do not have control over. The causes of the decline are not known. There are several factors that have been discussed, from overfishing, climate change, pacific warm blob (potential effects on food chain), poaching, poorly monitored US Subsistence in river fisheries, predators (seals and sea mammals), by-catch in marine fisheries, and competition with hatchery stocks to name a few.

As Elders, we are requesting all Tahltan to again respect our Tahltan Fisheries request to not put our nets in until early July, when most of the Kings will have gone up the Tahltan. There will be some Kings still traveling upriver and will be caught with the sockeyes. Please return those that are healthy. There will be some Kings that we will have to keep. This will be way less that we are used to harvesting, but we need to protect our Kings. We need to pass living King Salmon onto future generations of Tahltans.

We are sorry we have to request no nets in the river until early July, but it is necessary. We have a right to fish for Kings, but we also have a responsibility to protect them.

Thank you for understanding,

Tahltan Elders Council