



Cowichan Tribes

Cowichan Tribes Reiterates Call for Higher Cowichan Weir Following Fish Die Off in Cowichan River

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Duncan, B.C. (Quw'utsun Territory) - Cowichan Tribes, along with a number of other agencies, received a report from a concerned Duncan resident this week of a fish die off of juvenile salmonids in the Horseshoe Bend area of the Cowichan River.

Cowichan Tribes fisheries staff visited the site and noted several dozen deceased juvenile salmonids. The loss of any number of fish is very concerning. Lower river flows and higher water temperatures can increase the stress on fish, making it more difficult for them to withstand other pressures. While the cause of this incident has not yet been confirmed, Cowichan Tribes staff are working in concert with Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Cowichan Watershed Board, Catalyst Crofton, and others to conduct further environmental testing and data collection to determine the extent of the impact and what factors contributed to the death of these fish.

“On June 9, 2023, I sent a letter to BC Minister of Forests, Hon. Bruce Ralston, and Hon. Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship regarding extremely low water levels in the Cowichan River jeopardizing the survival of wild salmon fry,” said Cowichan Tribes Chief Lydia Hwitsum. “We also reiterated our call for the Province to come to the table to support a new, higher Cowichan Weir so that the river and salmon do not face these dire circumstances in the future,” added Hwitsum.

The acute need for replacement of the weir at Lake Cowichan has never been more evident as this year. This incident reinforces the concerns for the Cowichan River that been expressed for more than a decade. Leaders in the region have been working collaboratively and diligently to gain the necessary financial support to replace the weir, and it is now fully designed and engineered.

“Support is urgently needed from the Province of B.C. to match federal dollars. The environmental, social, and cultural importance of the Cowichan River is too important to delay any longer,” said Chief Hwitsum.

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