



## **COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee**

April 6, 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We are writing to introduce ourselves. On Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 150 active fishermen from almost every fishery in BC met via video call to discuss COVID-19 impacts on the commercial sector, and in particular, active fishermen. After three hours, it was decided to further the discussion by committee and a committee was set up to represent as many different fisheries as possible. The COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee (CVAFC) is made up of 25 active fishermen and representatives fishermen's organizations. Our committee is hardworking: in the weeks since the Fishermen's Meeting, the Committee has met five times.

The Committee has adopted the following as terms of reference:

- The committee's interest is to deal with issues arising from the Coronavirus pandemic related to fisheries
- This committee is made up of active fishermen and active fishermen's representatives
- The committee will respect different areas of fishing interest
- The committee will meet with other groups (processors – BCSA – FN – AVICC/CCN – PICFI program) and arrive at positions of common support
- The committee's goals are to protect fishermen and our communities while having fair and viable fisheries
- Helping fishermen deal with the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic
- The committee is not to create fishing plans or management changes for different fisheries

The COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee supports the Provincial Government's declaration of fisheries as an essential service. We are also supporting the request for a government emergency Task Force to work out COVID-19 issues as they impact the commercial fishing sector as a whole. The CVAFC would represent active fishermen in advice to the Task Force.

Up to this point, the COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee has been working on four issues: principles for change, fishermen-community interaction protocols, market/industry stabilization and financial relief. We are liaising with our counterparts across the country as well as working with industry groups, communities and indigenous organizations to build solid and supported approaches.

We have adopted the following principles to guide discussions throughout the industry on fisheries management issues:

- a. **Fisheries are an essential service and every effort should be made for fisheries to go ahead in order to support food security.**
- b. Whatever measures are taken to get us through this situation will be temporary and only for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- c. Whatever changes are put in place **must support active fishermen, promote equitable opportunities and support rural communities.** Active harvesters are the key producers of seafood for the country, and any changes should protect their interests.
- d. Encourage that all **leasing arrangements made prior to pandemic** be reviewed.
- e. The impact of any changes implemented to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic **support, as best as possible, equitable distribution of benefits** for all active fishermen in a fishery.

We have drafted a set of Fishermen-Community Protocols to ensure the safety of fishermen and the coastal communities we interact with. The COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee is providing it to fishermen's associations, fish buyers and communities for their comments. We believe issues of health and safety this are best dealt with at the Provincial level but the protocols are of such urgency; we are trying to get a head start on the process.

COVID-19 is negatively affected markets and the economic viability of many communities. CVAFC is willing to work with organizations and communities to support local food security through this crisis. Please do reach out to us to see if we can help meet your needs during this crisis.

Yours truly,  
 COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee (CVAFC)

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