

Agassiz Harrison Observer

Harrison River first Canadian 'salmon stronghold'

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The Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (PFRCC) announced today that the Harrison River has officially been identified as the first Salmon Stronghold in Canada under the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership.

Through this initiative, the healthiest and most productive salmon rivers receive special attention up-front to conserve and strengthen them, while efforts to restore other damaged streams where salmon are declining in number would continue.

"With the scientific analysis complete, we can now begin taking a proactive approach to protect salmon habitats and realize the potential of the Harrison River as a Salmon Stronghold," said Mark Angelo, Chair of the PFRCC (www.fish.bc.ca).

"Canada originated the idea of Strongholds a decade ago, and it's exciting to see it finally implemented here after seeing much success in the US Pacific North West. We believe that the Salmon Stronghold concept offers a new pro-active vision for wild salmon conservation."

The PFRCC is working closely with its partners – the Rivers Institute at BCIT, the Chehalis First Nation, the Nature Trust, and the Portland, Oregon-based Wild Salmon Center – to actively protect the important wild salmon habitats on the Harrison River.

Salmon Strongholds complement and fit well with current conservation strategies through proactive, collaborative conservation projects involving voluntary and locally-based initiatives, along with government agency participation. A particular focus of the Harrison Salmon Stronghold will be the purchase of land or property-rights arrangements (i.e. covenants, set-asides) at the landscape level with the intent of protecting areas of special significance for salmon. The North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership has determined strong populations in California, Oregon, Idaho and Washington State and is now conferring stronghold status to watersheds throughout these states.

The Harrison Stronghold area is located less than 100 km from the city of Vancouver, yet it sustains healthy populations of all five species of salmon as well as steelhead. The salmon habitat in the Harrison Basin is an example of a crucial salmon system that faces industrial and urbanization pressures.

The identification of the Harrison Basin as Canada's first Salmon Stronghold will serve as a rallying point for local residents, First Nations, fishing and environmental interests as well as local governments to work together to protect the uniqueness of the river's salmon habitats. The PFRCC will work cooperatively with local business and community groups to maximize the benefits associated with Stronghold recognition.

The Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (www.fish.bc.ca) was created in 1998 and is an independent ministerial advisory body whose mandate is to alert and inform the federal and provincial governments and the public about Pacific salmon stocks and their habitat.