

Subject: News Release: William Shatner urges BC steelhead protection

ACTOR WILLIAM SHATNER SAYS IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED TO SAVE THOMPSON STEELHEAD

“The time for consultation and studies long past,” William Shatner tells Fisheries Minister Dominic LeBlanc

NEWS RELEASE

December 12, 2017

The Steelhead Society of British Columbia, est. 1970

An iconic Canadian actor is calling for action to save an iconic population of British Columbia fish from extinction.

Montreal-born actor William Shatner is adding his voice to the call for immediate federal government action to save a collapsing steelhead salmon population in British Columbia’s Fraser River system.

Shatner on December 11 sent an open letter to Dominic LeBlanc, Canada’s fisheries minister, calling for closure of seine and gill net fisheries that are known to intercept Thompson River steelhead and stop them from reaching spawning grounds. Those fish are in the midst of an unprecedented collapse — down to 200 fish this year compared to 7,000 spawners in the 1980s. Conservationists warn that the fish won’t have even a chance to recover without aggressive action by the fisheries department.

Shatner, one of the world’s most recognizable actors, tells Leblanc “it is difficult to imagine that the Canadian government would stand idly by, allowing a ‘business as usual’ approach to prevail when a species is facing extinction.

“Thompson steelhead, an international treasure, need and deserve your immediate action,” Shatner adds. He cc’d his letter to three BC cabinet ministers, Agriculture Minister Lana Popham, Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Minister Doug Donaldson, and Environment Minister George Heyman.

It’s not the first time that Shatner, famed for his starring roles in the original Star Trek series and Boston Legal, has lent his celebrity to a high profile salmon conservation issue in British Columbia. He has waded on several occasions into the campaign by British Columbia conservation groups to shut down open net-pen salmon farming on the BC coast.

NEW E-PETITION DEMANDS FISHERY CLOSURES TO PROTECT STEELHEAD

Meanwhile, Steelhead Society BC Director Poul Bech is in the process of filing an e-petition to the Canadian Parliament, echoing Shatner’s call for a halt to all gillnet and purse seine fisheries during steelhead migration through South Coast waters and the Fraser River.

“This is a brand-new initiative by the Society,” SSBC President Brian Braidwood said. “We’re urging all Canadians who care about our natural environment and appreciate the importance of this iconic native BC

fish species to take a moment and add their names to the e-petition. We will be circulating further information about this e-petition as soon as it's available on the Canadian Parliament website.

“We recognize that Minister LeBlanc is promising action under Canada’s Species At Risk Act on behalf of Thompson steelhead but we’re concerned that the government will face pressure to accommodate special interests as it proceeds, rather than taking all necessary action to save these fish from extinction.”

In part, the e-petition says:

“We, the undersigned, **citizens of Canada**, call upon the **Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard** to suspend henceforth all gill net and purse seine chum salmon fisheries in the Fraser River and approach areas including Johnstone Strait during the annual Interior Fraser River Steelhead migration in the months of September, October and November; and to work with gill net and purse seine fishers to establish alternative, sustainable, fully selective and fully monitored fisheries practices during the annual Interior Fraser River steelhead migration.”

Formed in 1970 by a group of dedicated Steelhead anglers concerned about the state of wild steelhead stocks and the wild rivers of British Columbia, the Steelhead Society is a charitable non-profit river conservation organization. The Society has evolved to advocate for the health of all wild salmonids and wild rivers in British Columbia.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Brian Braidwood, President, SSBC

[604-626-7085](tel:604-626-7085)

brian_braidwood@hotmail.com

Cody Sojka, Director, SSBC

[\(778\)-241-2837](tel:778-241-2837)

Cody_Sojka@hotmail.ca

HERE IS THE FULL TEXT OF SHATNER’S LETTER

Dear Minister,

Thompson River steelhead, a fish revered by anglers around the world for their strength and beauty, are quickly losing their battle for survival. As you know, gill nets and other non-selective fishing methods intercept many of these great fish as they journey home. In 2017, fewer than 200 are expected to reach their spawning waters.

We aren’t left with many more trips around the sun on this small rock to get things right when it comes to the environment. Steelhead are an indicator species: when they go, we know we’ve made mistakes from which we may never recover.

Recent media attention, a parliamentary e-petition, and an online petition that has accumulated more than 47,000 signatures from around the world remind us that the world sees Canada as the place where the wild things are, and that the international

community expects Canadians to demonstrate leadership in protecting wild things in wild places. It is difficult to imagine that the Canadian government would stand idly by, allowing a “business as usual” approach to prevail when a species is facing extinction. The time for consultation and studies is long past. Thompson Steelhead “recovery plans” sit unopened on dusty shelves. Thompson steelhead, an international treasure, need and deserve your immediate action.

In every lifetime, a person of influence and power, if they are fortunate, has the opportunity to do something great, to truly make a difference in the world, and create a lasting legacy. What will be yours? Previous Ministers have missed their chance; yours lies before you. Take decisive action now to ensure the survival of endangered Thompson steelhead.

The world is waiting. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

William Shatner