



## GEORGIA BASIN STEELHEAD STOCKS IN DECLINE

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A new report released today draws attention to a declining trend in wild steelhead stocks in the majority of priority watersheds in the Greater Georgia Basin. The Steelhead Recovery Action Plan, authored by Al Lill on behalf of the Pacific Salmon Foundation and funded by the Province of British Columbia, reports that stocks in 48 of the 58 highest priority watersheds are now in decline. The report also notes that 51 of 55 winter runs, and all but one of 22 summer runs, are at or below “conservation concern” status.

“The report is an extensive look at the health of wild steelhead stocks in the Greater Georgia Basin,” said Lill. “Our goal in developing this Action Plan is to draw attention to the status of wild steelhead stocks and to mobilize people into action to stabilize and restore stocks and habitat to healthy, self-sustaining levels. The choice is ours, we can do nothing and let steelhead continue to decline to dangerous levels near extinction, or we can act now and ensure a healthy population for future generations.”

The Steelhead Recovery Action Plan cites many factors for the declining population – including reduced ocean survival combined with impaired freshwater habitat capability. Key to the Plan are the recommendations to halt and reverse the declining trend. Calling on all stakeholders – provincial, federal and regional governments, resource-based industries, First Nations, non-government environmental agencies and local community groups, Lill’s report outlines actions that range from new regulations aimed at reversing the degradation of habitat to the development of slow release fertilizers to improve fresh water growth and survival. The recommendations estimate that \$4 million per year will be required to halt the certain extinction of many runs.

“Mr. Lill’s report highlights the very essence of Pacific Salmon Foundation’s mandate,” notes Executive Director Paul Kariya. “Without placing blame on any one source – and relying on science-based information – it illustrates the need for all stakeholders to enter into a partnership that will address the situation we now find ourselves facing.” Dr. Kariya goes on to explain that steelhead are one of the most important fish in the Georgia Basin system and act as indicators for other species of salmon and fish. “If a watershed cannot support steelhead, it won’t be very long before other species follow suit.”

“Our government is committed to developing a comprehensive Living Rivers Strategy to protect and improve BC’s river systems with scientifically-based standards for watershed management, enhancements to fish habitat and a 10-year program to correct past damage,” said Water, Land and Air Protection Minister Joyce Murray. “This recovery plan will help to develop the partnerships needed to address the decline in steelhead populations and serves as an excellent model for future actions.”

The Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead Recovery Action Plan is available on Pacific Salmon Foundation’s website: [www.pacificsalmon.ca](http://www.pacificsalmon.ca) or by calling the Foundation at 604-664-7664.

For more information, please contact Paul Kariya, Executive Director, Pacific Salmon Foundation at 604-664-7664.