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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coast Tsimshian Oppose Policy and Process for Herring Openings - Communities assert herring IFMP is flawed and DFO ignores their fundamental obligations

PRINCE RUPERT, BC/COAST TSIMSHIAN TERRITORY, March 22, 2021 – After meeting with DFO personnel on March 15, 2021 regarding the proposed 2021 commercial herring opening, Lax Kw'alaams and Metlakatla (collectively known as the Coast Tsimshian) believed DFO was more committed to defending outdated process and policy positions rather than working collaboratively with the Coast Tsimshian.

Coast Tsimshian have issued a joint letter to Ms. Rebecca Reid, Regional Director General of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Coast Tsimshian assert that the herring Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (“IFMP”) was seriously flawed and ignored the fundamental obligations of DFO. The Coast Tsimshian position is that the herring IFMP and the proposed opening violate the principles of conservation and s.35.1 fisheries as the priority.

Our communities do not consent to any commercial opening in our territories, and we categorically challenge DFO justification. The strained herring population does not support commercial removals as current stocks cannot support Coast Tsimshian food requirements, and low stocks are also impacting many other species highly dependent on herring. The challenge to meet herring related food requirements and manage the impact to other species has been on-going for over a decade, and Coast Tsimshian food security concerns are dramatically escalating.

The DFO Herring Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) is in the process of developing trustworthy and acceptable science, that all parties can accept, as the current mortality model used coastwide in 2021 is not ecologically sensitive to the conditions in PRD. DFO decision-makers are responsible for accurately interpreting the data and science and, at the very least, each region in BC should be independently evaluated to select the most appropriate model – it is critical for DFO to start carefully and diligently assessing and considering the limitations and assumptions used in existing data and resource models.

Coast Tsimshian were aware the decision to utilize the Density Dependent mortality model over the other mortality models was applied coastwide, and this appeared to be based on ease of management. Lax Kw'alaams and Metlakatla have very serious concerns with the credibility and reliability of the existing

data and science, and assert that the most ecologically conservative models must be used for decision-making in PRD in 2021 to protect herring and dependent species from serious harm.

The extremely low herring population trends in PRD must be left to recover and rebuild to an ecologically supportive population that would allow for a celebrated s.35.1 harvest. Coast Tsimshian call on DFO to keep the commercial herring fishery closed. This decision will allow herring populations to recover and increase dramatically, benefit multiple marine populations, improve First Nations' food security, and in the long-term increase confidence for multiple commercial and recreational fisheries.

Our communities are committed to open and transparent communication with DFO, and we see the reciprocal sentiment as a fundamental step in the reconciliation process, especially with regard to invaluable local herring populations and abundance. Coast Tsimshian call for immediate collaboration with DFO to announce a necessary commercial herring fishery closure.

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Lax Kw'alaams Band

Lax Kw'alaams is located on the northwest coast of B.C., approximately 20km north of Prince Rupert. The Lax Kw'alaams Band consists of members of the Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian. The name, Lax Kw'alaams, derives from Laxłgu'alaams, which means 'place of small roses' in Sm'algyax, the language of the Coast Tsimshian. For more information visit: www.laxkwalaams.ca

Metlakatla First Nation

Metlakatla village is located 5km north of Prince Rupert, on an ancient site – occupied for thousands of years. The Metlakatla Band members are members of the Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian. Metlakatla means 'saltwater pass' in Sm'algyax, the language of the Coast Tsimshian. For more information visit: www.metlakatla.ca

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