



# Press Release



## LAUNCH OF THE 2020 GULF OF ALASKA EXPEDITION

March 11, 2020 – The International Year of the Salmon (IYS) and Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) are proud to announce that Canadian charter vessel *Pacific Legacy* is leaving from Point Hope Shipyard to embark on a second research expedition to study the winter ecology of Pacific salmon in the Gulf of Alaska.

The first International Gulf of Alaska Expedition was conducted in 2019. In addition to successfully completing the first-ever on-board stock assessment of the environmental DNA of salmon, the 2019 expedition made a number of discoveries that will allow us to be effective stewards of Pacific salmon in a future of changing ecosystems.

The 2020 Gulf of Alaska expedition will build on this research. The study is a continuation of the international scientific effort to identify mechanisms and environmental factors that could determine the annual abundance and condition of Pacific salmonids in the Gulf of Alaska. It also seeks to establish greater international research capacity for understanding the consequences of future environmental conditions and is being used to study the impacts of extreme climate events and ocean conditions.

It is believed that the ‘readiness’ of juvenile salmon to survive winters in the Gulf of Alaska may be determined during the first months at sea. The stocks of origin of salmon that we encounter and identify using DNA and health data (energy, content, pathogens etc.) will increase our knowledge of this potentially critical period for survival and production of B.C. salmon. These discoveries may provide the critical basis in forecasting and managing salmon populations in a rapidly changing environment.

The second expedition is privately organized by Dr. Richard Beamish and Dr. Brian Riddell. The Pacific Salmon Foundation in conjunction with its Salish Sea Marine Survival Program, and the British Columbia Salmon Innovation and Restoration Fund (BC SRIF) are contributors to the 2020 expedition. BC SRIF is contributing \$3 million over 3 years for the 2021 Pan Pacific High Seas Expedition being planned by the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC). The British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund is funded jointly by the federal and provincial government. The fund will provide an investment of up to \$143 million over five years to support BC’s fish and seafood sector, and to ensure the sustainability of wild Pacific salmon and other B.C. fish stocks.

Prior to departure, dignitaries from the Province of BC, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and chief organizers Dr. Richard Beamish and Dr. Brian Riddell will speak on the importance of the research event. There will be a period for Q&A, a photo opportunity with dignitaries, the ship and scientific crew, and a tour of the vessel.

We acknowledge and thank the Lkwyen People, also known as the Songhees, Esquimalt, and Beecher Bay First Nations communities, for allowing us to live, work and play on their lands.

## **About International Year of the Salmon**

International Year of the Salmon (IYS) is a 5-year initiative to establish the resilience of salmon and people in a changing world. It is a hemispheric partnership being led by the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) in the North Pacific, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) in the North Atlantic, as well as by NGOs, private sector, government and academic organizations.

## **About Pacific Salmon Foundation**

The Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) is a federally incorporated non-profit charitable organization dedicated to the

Please contact our event coordinators **Camille Jasinski** ([cjasinski@npafc.org](mailto:cjasinski@npafc.org) phone number **778-893-4377**) or **Mark Saunders** ([msaunders@yearofthesalmon.org](mailto:msaunders@yearofthesalmon.org)) phone no. **778-928-3474**) for further inquiry.

## **Quotes**

“Healthy pacific salmon populations are key to coastal communities and the culture and history of Indigenous peoples, and the research conducted on this ship offers hope and promise to all who are concerned about wild salmon. As scientists from around the Pacific begin to fill the knowledge gaps we have around salmon lifecycles and journeys, we can develop corresponding policies and programs that support future generations of both wild fisheries and British Columbians.”

*The Honourable Minister Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture*

“The expedition last year and this year will provide new understandings of the mechanisms regulating the abundance of salmon after they enter the ocean. The baker’s dozen of enthusiastic international aquatic explorers who have volunteered to be on this second expedition will make discoveries that will eventually change how we manage salmon in British Columbia and the North Pacific”

*Dr. Richard Beamish, C.M., O.B.C., Ph.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.C. Emeritus Scientists with DFO at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo*

“The Pacific Salmon Foundation is excited to support the second expedition to the Gulf of Alaska and to continue our studies of Pacific salmon. Last year’s expedition teased us with the unexpected and the exciting, but we don’t learn from one observation. The 2020 expedition begins our learning process and, hopefully, to further explain recent declines in BC’s Pacific Salmon production.”

*Dr. Brian Riddell, Science Advisor, Pacific Salmon Foundation*