



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Pacific Salmon Foundation and Fraser Basin Council Fund Nutrient Monitoring for Cultus Lake**

Vancouver, B.C. – As the annual Father’s Day pikeminnow derby assists sockeye salmon by fishing their competitors out of Cultus Lake, another project to benefit the Cultus sockeye is launching. The Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Fraser Basin Council will grant \$44,000 from their collaborative Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program (FSWP) to monitor the levels and sources of nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) in Cultus Lake while continuing to build the lake-caring community. FSWP investment in this project and related earlier work is being leveraged into assistance from government agencies and inclusive stakeholder involvement.

Humans love lakes and especially Cultus Lake, now receiving 3 million visitors per year. Scientific core samples show human activity over the last 50 to 100 years has directly or indirectly left too much nutrient that degrades the lake quality. This process is called eutrophication and is lethal to fish. Cultus Lake is the only freshwater nursery habitat for a genetically distinct, low-abundance population of sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*), listed as endangered in 2002 by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC 2003). Additionally, Cultus Lake hosts the Cultus Pygmy Sculpin, that is listed as threatened under the Species-At-Risk-Act (SARA) and that faces similar freshwater stressors.

Led by DFO scientists and the Fraser Basin Council, the nutrient monitoring project stems from the Cultus Lake Aquatic Stewardship Strategy (CLASS) that seeks to balance the ecological and recreational significance of Cultus Lake. CLASS has identified that nutrient loading is both a serious ecological issue and a significant social concern for users of the watershed, as population densities and development continue to increase. Diverse user groups stand willing to tackle nutrient abatement. As a first step, the monitoring project will draw on volunteers and scientific experts to establish a comprehensive description of the fluxes in and major sources of nutrients to Cultus Lake. Once the two year project is

completed, the data generated will be useful in land use and nutrient management plans for the Cultus Lake watershed.

Other projects in the area include work by BC Conservation Foundation to increase nutrients in streams with low concentration, fish habitat assessment by the City of Chilliwack, a new program to engage youth by Fraser Valley Conservancy and the continuation of the Salmon Table forum that has led to groundbreaking collaboration among First Nation, sport, commercial and conservation interests in fisheries.

The projects are receiving 2011 funding from the Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program (FSWP), which will deliver \$960,000 from the provincial Living Rivers Trust Fund throughout the Fraser Basin. To act on its mission of inspiring changes in human behaviour for the benefit of salmon and watersheds, FSWP enables communities to steward their water and salmon resources by building collaboration, fostering leadership and increasing engagement. Projects focus on the need to

- Improve habitat resilience through effective collaboration on habitat work;
- Foster local decision making that considers whole watersheds;
- Enable strategies and science that help fisheries to preserve the abundance and genetic diversity of salmon, especially in the face of climate change impacts; and
- Promote water or salmon friendly actions and provide education that gives context to the actions.

See the project section of [www.ThinkSalmon.com](http://www.ThinkSalmon.com) for a list, a map and descriptions of projects funded by FSWP throughout the Fraser Basin over its six years of operation.

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For more information about nutrient monitoring or the planning strategy for Cultus Lake, contact Marion Robinson, [mrobinson@fraserbasin.bc.ca](mailto:mrobinson@fraserbasin.bc.ca) or 604.826.1661.

A list of the projects with approved FSWP funding is attached for your convenience. If you would like to interview a representative from Pacific Salmon Foundation, Fraser Basin Council or someone from any the funded projects, please contact: Megan Moser at [mmoser@psf.ca](mailto:mmoser@psf.ca) or 604.664.7664.