FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 17, 2020

Improved Infrastructure, Improved Access for Freshwater Anglers in the Cariboo

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a huge surge in interest in freshwater fishing throughout North America as people turn to the outdoors for physically distanced recreation and relaxation. In BC, resident angler licence sales have increased 14% over 2019 while sales to 16 to 24-year-old anglers have surged 55%. The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC is investing in key infrastructure to support the growing number of anglers and the economies they support. These key projects will support freshwater fishing’s contribution to economic recovery in the Cariboo and diversify the tourism offerings.

Working in collaboration with organizations and communities in the region, the Freshwater Fisheries Society is improving access to lakes along the Highway 24 corridor, diversifying experiences along “The Fishing Highway” to draw more residents and visitors to the region. Fishing docks have just been installed at Phinetta and Hathaway lakes, improving access for fishers of all ages and experience levels. Later this month, a third dock will be installed at Irish Lake and improvements are also being made to the boat launch on the northwest end of Horse Lake.

“This investment is an excellent step towards building back tourism in the region as well as raising the profile of the Fishing Highway both for visitors and for residents,” says Irene Meili, Chair of the Fishing Highway 24 Tourist Association. “It continues to expand the fishing choices people have. And the more choices people have, the more reasons they have to choose the Fishing Highway for their angling experience.”

The improvements are the first to be announced as part of a three-year collaborative recreational tourism initiative. The Fishing Highway Access Improvement projects are funded through a grant administered by Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. The improvements will assist with economic development and recovery of tourism destinations in rural BC following COVID-19 by improving public lake access to recreational fishing destinations.

“Improving infrastructure is fundamental to building fishing tourism in rural communities and dispersing angler effort around the province. More and more, visitors will be attracted to the area when they know they can enjoy fishing in a variety of locations and that experience is supported by clearly marked signage and amenities,” says Matt Jennings, Executive Director, BC Fishing Tourism Association.

“Investment shows the world that we are committed to great fishing experiences for anglers at all levels. We hope avid anglers will return with their children to share fishing experiences here.”

The grant also supports the collaborative promotion of fishing opportunities with tourism partners and the delivery of outreach including improved signage.
The projects are designed to support visitors, especially from longer haul markets, by giving them a greater choice of year-round self-directed and guided experiences. Greater lake access means additional reasons to come to the region, creating a draw both for people specifically seeking a fishing experience as well as for those looking for general outdoor experiences.

The provincial government is providing $14Million in grants to 150 projects to support rural BC economies. Freshwater Fisheries received a grant of $309,000 to be invested exclusively in Hwy 24 access improvement and infrastructure projects over three years. “Additional projects will be announced as permits are approved and agreements are signed with partners, including for docks, boat launches, enhancing trail networks and toilet facilities at access points, especially for winter ice fishing,” says Mike Gass, Sport Fishing Development Manager, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC.

Groups that contributed to the development of the 3 year plan identifying priority infrastructure projects included: Fishing Highway 24 Tourist Association, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Marketing Association, BC Fishing Tourism Association, Destination BC, Deka Lake and District Rate Payers Association, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, BC Parks, Rec Sites and Trails BC, Cariboo Regional District and the Cariboo and Thompson Nicola Fish and Wildlife branches.

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC was created in 2003 as a private, not-for-profit organization, funded mainly through freshwater fishing licence revenues. In partnership with the Province, the Society annually stocks six million trout, char and kokanee in 800 B.C. lakes. It also manages special hatchery programs for endangered species including white sturgeon, conducts fisheries research, education and conservation programs, and works to make angling more accessible for all. To find out more, visit gofishbc.com.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 13, 2020

Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC Hosts Summer Fishing Challenge
Youth encouraged to explore BC’s freshwater fishing

As young anglers are discovering or rediscovering the joy of fishing in British Columbia’s rivers, lakes and streams, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC has launched the Summer Fishing Challenge to help youth 15 and younger enjoy the sport even more with rewards just for going fishing.

The first 1,000 youth who record at least five fishing trips are eligible to win a prize from the Society.

“We wanted to celebrate the sport of freshwater fishing which is a lot more than just catching fish. It’s about enjoying the outdoors and visiting special places that are often close to home” says Jessica Yarwood, Freshwater Fisheries Society’s Outreach Coordinator “While everyone loves to catch a fish and most trips start with high hopes, sometimes the fish just don’t bite. But those trips are still memorable and we wanted to celebrate that.”

To enter, fill out the fishing journal or the online journal by recording each fishing trip and taking a photo during that trip. Photos can be of the lake river scenery, people fishing or that day’s catch. Photos can be of multiple trips to the same location or to different locations. Entrants are also required to correctly answer a skill testing question.

Youth who catch a fish on each of five different fishing trips can also enter to win a Blue Fox Fishing rod & reel from Luhr Jensen. The rod & reel prize will be awarded to each of the first 200 eligible submissions.

Entrants can download a form to fill out and return by email or fill out the online form. Full contest rules and the fishing journal are posted at https://www.gofishbc.com/Blog/Fishing-Tips/Summer-Fishing-Challenge.aspx. Entries can be sent via e-mail to LearntoFish@gofishbc.com or submitted using the online form (with photos attached), by September 8th, 2020. Parent/guardian consent required.

British Columbia residents under 16 years old may sport fish in fresh water without any licence or stamp, and are entitled to the legal limit of fish. Anglers 16 and older require a B.C. freshwater fishing licence to sport fish.

Anglers are reminded to comply with the B.C. Freshwater Fishing Regulations and practice physical distancing.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 2, 2020

Freshwater Fishing Experiencing Huge Jump in BC
Young adults taking up the sport in largest numbers

While many sports are taking a hiatus over the summer or making a limited restart, the sport of freshwater fishing in British Columbia is experiencing a surge in participation. Overwhelmingly, youth are taking up the sport this summer and heading out to enjoy both urban and rural fishing experiences.

Resident angler sales are 16% higher than last year, which was a strong year spring for licence sales. Total fishing licence sales are 3% above 2019 sales, more than offsetting licence purchases by non-resident Canadian, American and international anglers in April and May.

“As a sport that naturally allows for social distancing while still offering individuals and families an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, freshwater fishing is the perfect summer activity. We are excited to see more BC residents enjoying the world class fishing in their own backyard,” says Andrew Wilson, President, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. “We hope people will take their fishing enjoyment on their travels and explore rivers and lakes throughout the province. They will discover why BC is a world class fishing destination!”

Youth age 16 – 24 have most enthusiastically taken up the sport with a 55% increase in licence purchases compared to 2019 while there has been a 15% increase in purchases by those in the 25 – 34 year-old age group. Licence sales have increased 10% in the 35 – 44 year-old age group. Youth under 16 years old are not required to purchase a licence.

Licence sales year to date have decreased 17% for anglers 65 and older.

As a result of implementing enhanced protocols, hatchery staff were able to safely continue working through the spring. This allowed the Freshwater Fisheries Society to maintain operations and meet stocking targets throughout the province, even when access was closed for safety reasons.

“We were able to continue our fish stocking through the spring, releasing as many yearling and catchable size fish as in previous years,” says Tim Yesaki, Vice President of Operations. “We worked with fantastic staff at regional and provincial parks to ensure stocking continued, even behind locked gates. As those parks re-opened, anglers were rewarded with fantastic fishing. We are pleased that we were able to meet the stocking plans to ensure new anglers, as well as our frequent anglers, have a great fishing experience this summer.”

July and August are the most popular months for non-resident Canadians to make fishing trips to BC and July-September are the months most international anglers visit BC. Fishing guides and lodges, most of
which are located in rural BC, are hoping the jump in resident licence sales will lead to more BC anglers booking fishing trips and holidays this year.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 10, 2019

BCIT Student Earns Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC Scholarship

[Victoria, B.C.] A lifelong drive to make a difference combined with a passion for the outdoors has earned BCIT student Chenoa Flack a $1,500 scholarship from the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. The scholarship will further her study in the Fish, Wildlife and Recreation program and help her pursue a meaningful career in fisheries conservation or research.

Growing up in Chilliwack, Flack enjoyed a childhood spent exploring B.C. with her family. Her appreciation for sport fishing and outdoor recreation began at an early age, including spending time fishing on the Vedder River and in the surrounding wild spaces.

After earning a Bachelor’s degree in Chemical Biology from Thompson Rivers University, Flack volunteered with BC Wildlife Park in Kamloops which inspired her to work in conservation. In her first year at BCIT she discovered the world of fish ecology. She is currently volunteering at the Noons Creek Hatchery in Port Moody.

“My interests and hobbies have continued to gravitate back to the outdoors. Resource management is my true calling and will be a career that fosters my need for lifelong learning and innovation,” says Flack. “I hope to use my genetics background and analytical skills in tandem with my new knowledge to help to solve current issues in our fisheries, such as infectious disease transfer and sea lice control.”

As a lifelong outdoor enthusiast with a biology background, Flack’s interests have taken her through a variety of experiences gained through jobs in laboratory science and veterinary medicine. The combination of experiences paired with her educational background will provide a unique perspective for furthering the science of resource management.

“Many applications were from students in resource management and ecological restoration programs,” says Tammy Longbottom, HR Director, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. “There is a great deal of interest in the stewardship of our freshwater habitats and we are excited to support these students as they become strong contributors in the field.”

Since 2008, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC has awarded over $66,000 in scholarships to 39 students. The scholarships recognize outstanding commitment to academic pursuits in the field of freshwater fisheries. Other students selected for a scholarship were Mark Frisson of Vancouver Island University, Katie Zinn of University of British Columbia and Kate O’Neill of BCIT and Simon Fraser University joint masters program.
Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC scholarships are available to students enrolled in fish culture or natural resource management programs within a recognized post-secondary education institution in British Columbia. To be eligible, applicants must have completed at least their first year of post secondary studies and plan to continue as a student, with the intent of establishing a career in B.C.

Scholarship applicants submitted a written or video essay outlining their experience, interests and chosen educational program, along with a transcript and resume. Students explained how their interests and chosen studies will support key goals of BC’s freshwater fisheries industry such as research and habitat conservation. Submissions were received from 17 students attending post-secondary education institutions throughout the province.

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Ecological Restoration Masters Student Earns Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC Scholarship

From an early age Kate O’Neill had a love for the aquatic environment. Her desire to add to the body of knowledge to protect freshwater fisheries and restore, protect, and conserve streams in B.C. has earned her a $1,500 scholarship from the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. The scholarship will support O’Neill as she embarks on her second year in the Masters in Ecological Restoration, a joint program between the British Columbia Institute of Technology and Simon Fraser University.

Growing up on Lake Superior fostered O’Neill’s curiosity and passion for freshwater environments. From hiking and canoeing to snorkeling and fishing for lake trout at the family cabin, her aquatic interest always remained at the forefront. Her passion for a career in the environmental field began with her first job. As an Ontario Ranger with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources she was involved with a variety of environmental stewardship projects, something she could envision doing for the rest of her life.

O’Neill graduated with a Bachelor of Science, Honours in Environmental Science from the University of Guelph in 2013. While she completed her undergraduate degree, she worked a summer job as an assistant aquatic biologist, conducting research with the Centre for Northern Forest Ecosystem Research in Thunder Bay, Ontario. “Our aim was to better understand the effects of forestry on the aquatic environment. That job really sparked my interest in aquatic biology and defined my education and career path,” says O’Neill.

“I have been conducting my Masters research on the Tsolum River in the Comox Valley, with the aim of identifying groundwater and surface water interactions using temperature loggers,” says O’Neill. “Identifying, protecting, and restoring critical thermal refugia for salmonids will be especially important in the face of our changing climate. I would like to continue to study ways in which we can mitigate changes that will adversely affect fish health.”

After graduation O’Neill worked at a number of jobs including as an interim field biologist at a windfarm, a field logistics intern in Melbourne with Earthwatch Australia and an environmental scientist with Dillon Consulting Limited. While the jobs were fulfilling, O’Neill always envisioned returning to the ecological restoration field.

“Many applications were from students in resource management and ecological restoration programs,” says Tammy Longbottom, HR Director, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. “There is a great deal of interest in the stewardship of our freshwater habitats and we are excited to support these students as they become strong contributors in the field.”
Since 2008, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC has awarded over $66,000 in scholarships to 39 students. The scholarships recognize outstanding commitment to academic pursuits in the field of freshwater fisheries. Other students selected for a scholarship were Mark Frisson of Vancouver Island University, Chenoa Flack of BCIT and Katie Zinn of University of British Columbia.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 10, 2019

UBC Student Earns Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC Scholarship

A passion for protecting habitat combined with a specific interest in freshwater aquatic species has earned UBC student Katie Zinn a $1,500 scholarship from the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. The scholarship will support her completing her Masters of Science in the department of zoology in 2020.

Growing up in Metro Vancouver’s Coquitlam, Zinn’s summers were spent on the Sunshine Coast exploring the intertidal zone, becoming acquainted with the resident sea creatures and fishing for rock fish from the dock. During these summer days she discovered her affinity for aquatic creatures and their fundamental place in the ecosystem.

Zinn completed an undergraduate degree in Natural Resource Conservation with a specialty in Science and Management at UBC. While completing her degree she volunteered as a lab assistant at the Pacific Salmon and Ecology and Conservation Laboratory, which further cemented the idea that studying fish was the right route for her.

“I am studying the effects of reduced streamflow on hypoxia and habitat use of the endangered Salish sucker as well as juvenile Coho,” says Zinn. “Wild, healthy stocks of fish are arguably the most important ecological piece of B.C. As their future is in jeopardy, I hope to make a positive difference for these species during my career and life.”

Zinn is also a member of the Canadian Freshwater Species at Risk Research Network, a group that focuses on the needs of endangered fish species across Canada. A stint as a wildfire fighter in Cranbrook during the last two summers of her undergraduate degree led Zinn to the sport of freshwater fishing and at the same time impressed upon her the need for species conservation.

“Many applications were from students in resource management and ecological restoration programs,” says Tammy Longbottom, HR Director, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. “There is a great deal of interest in the stewardship of our freshwater habitats and we are excited to support these students as they become strong contributors in the field.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 10, 2019

Vancouver Island University Student Earns Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC Scholarship

An appreciation for British Columbia’s unique and diverse natural resources and a desire to protect and preserve them has earned Vancouver Island University student Mark Frisson a $1,500 scholarship from the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. The scholarship will support his third-year studies in the BSc Fisheries and Aquaculture program at VIU and help him pursue a meaningful career in fisheries conservation or research.

Growing up in the Comox Valley, Frisson spent his childhood fishing with his family and cultivating a passion for British Columbia’s fish species. After joining the Steelhead Society of British Columbia, Frisson developed a particular interest in the protection and conservation of steelhead and the habitat they need to thrive.

Frisson volunteers with the Steelhead Society, working to protect steelhead rivers. He also volunteers with Quinsam and Puntledge hatcheries, participating in numerous projects to support the survival of Pacific salmon.

“Through working with the Steelhead Society of British Columbia and angling for steelhead I have developed a particular passion for the species. They are an iconic freshwater sport fish in British Columbia that drives the economy in many small towns,” says Frisson. “With increased urbanization, logging and fishing, the species is under more pressure than ever before. Through my studies I am acquiring invaluable skills that will allow me to pursue a successful career in habitat conservation and fisheries management and determine ways to ease the pressure on this and other species.”

Through the summer months Frisson works as a Creel Surveyor in Nootka Sound. These surveys ask anglers about their fishing experience including what kinds of fish they are catching and how long they spent catching fish. Creel surveys provide valuable data about angler participation, catch rates and the estimated sport harvest.

“Many applications were from students in resource management and ecological restoration programs,” says Tammy Longbottom, HR Director, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. “There is a great deal of interest in the stewardship of our freshwater habitats and we are excited to support these students as they become strong contributors in the field.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 3, 2019

20th Anniversary of BC’s Family Fishing Weekend
Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC to Participate in 10 events

[Victoria, B.C.] An initiative launched two decades ago to offer families a fun, affordable Father’s Day activity has become a staple Father’s Day tradition in communities throughout the province. Growing from a handful of events in Vancouver, Victoria and the Okanagan, there are now nearly 50 events throughout the province, joining a larger Father’s Day trend of creating experiences and making memories with Dad to celebrate Father’s Day while kicking off the fishing season.

Family Fishing Weekend events take place June 14 – 16, 2019. The events combine fishing, learning and socializing for an estimated 40,000 participants who range from avid anglers to those trying the sport for the first time.

Family Fishing Weekend events are free, with hands-on instruction available to interested participants. Loaner rods, reels and tackle are provided for those who do not have their own gear. The events also offer opportunities to learn about fishing gear, share freshwater and saltwater fishing tips and learn about environmental stewardship and the tradition of recreational fishing.

Fishing licence requirements are waived for the weekend, meaning Canadian residents can fish licence-free over the three days, although some requirements remain in effect. Details are posted on the BC Family Fishing website and the Fisheries and Oceans website.

Events are supported by the Family Fishing Society and organized by Fish and Game clubs, the Conservation Officer Service, municipalities, community groups, and local businesses. A complete list of participating communities, locations, and event descriptions, along with step-by-step fishing instructions, can be found at www.bcfamilyfishing.com. Freshwater and tidal fishing regulations, including daily catch quotas, always apply; details are posted at www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca or www.fishing.gov.bc.ca.

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC is a key partner of the Family Fishing Society, and will be participating in 10 of the events throughout the province:

- Victoria: Malahat Outdoor Sports Centre June 15/ June 16
- Kelowna: Shannon Lake June 16
- Cranbrook: Idlewild Lake June 16
- Coquitlam: Lafarge Lake June 16
- Kamloops: Walloper Lake June 16
Nanaimo  Colliery Dam Park  June 14
North Vancouver  Rice Lake  June 16
Clearwater  Clearwater Trout Hatchery  June 15
Abbotsford  Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery  June 15
Fort Steele  Kootenay Trout Hatchery  June 15

“It has been exciting to watch families become engaged with freshwater fishing through these events,” says Provincial Coordinator of the Family Fishing Society of BC, Jessica Yarwood. “By providing gear and instruction in a fun environment the events are very accessible to families with children of all ages.”

The Family Fishing Society of BC was established in 2001 to encourage new anglers as well as promote and coordinate Family Fishing Weekend and other angling initiatives targeted toward families and young people. 2019 marks the 20th year of the licence-free fishing weekend.

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