

Study results show fishing access is a barrier for BC harvesters

Nov 9, 2020 - BC coastal communities rely on fishing to support their livelihoods, culture, and food security.

However, increased pressure on resources and unfair regulations have put the many values gained from fishing — that Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters, business owners, and coastal communities depend on — at risk. One of the most significant and growing challenges they face are the barriers to access and benefit from available marine resources.

A team of researchers and practitioners with the OceanCanada Partnership, including members of The TBuck Suzuki Foundation, Ecotrust Canada, UBC Oceans and Fisheries, and the Nuu-chah-nulth Fisheries Department, collaborated to better understand the access needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous commercial harvesters and their communities. The team brought voices of harvesters to the forefront of their research, by conducting surveys and interviews with harvesters in coastal communities throughout BC.

Most harvesters expressed satisfaction with their access to boats and equipment to be able to fish, and felt they had the skills needed to do their job. Most respondents also felt they had a supportive social network.

Access to fishing rights, licensing, and quota, stood out as an area of deep dissatisfaction among harvesters. Furthermore, the vast majority of fish harvesters were very dissatisfied with the security and protection of their rights and the rights of coastal communities to fish. This insecurity is having a crippling effect on Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters and coastal communities. Most were also frustrated with their abilities to have a voice or influence in fisheries management and did not feel they were receiving sufficient governmental support. With these ongoing struggles harvesters are finding it hard to visualize a brighter future for the next generation. It was found that 77% of fish harvesters were concerned about the outlook for future fishing generations.

There is a need to find pathways to ensure future generations can continue to benefit from fisheries. Listening to our Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters, and addressing the access issues they face is a key part of BC fisheries management, and will help to ensure the viability of fisheries and coastal communities.

- [Full report here](#)
- [Summary here](#)

Quotes

"Having a successful fisheries operation requires both abundant fish and the ability to access those fish. Fisheries management in Canada needs to consider both fish and people and address both abundance and access issues simultaneously." - Nathan Bennett, PhD, Co-author of Fishing for a Future

"This report shows the importance of legal access for harvesters and coastal communities. If we want resilient coastal communities in the face of rapid change we must keep legal access in the hands of harvesters and coastal communities. This will protect us now and for generations to come." - Jim McIssac, Executive Director, TBuck Suzuki Foundation

About The TBuck Suzuki Foundation

The T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation works with fishermen, First Nations, NGOs, scholars, and governments to drive responsible and equitable governance of our coastal resources. We support the fishermen stewarding B.C.'s marine resources, promote coastal communities access to the province's marine resources, and seek to build the capacity of a new generation of coastal leaders.

Website - www.bucksuzuki.org Further reports on legal access - www.bucksuzuki.org/legal_access

Contact

Hannah Fiegenbaum - Communications, TBuck Suzuki Foundation

T: 778-512-5298 hannah@bucksuzuki.org