

## **Area C Commercial Fishing COVID-19 Safety Plan for Area 8** **(Bella Coola area)**

The Nuxalk First Nation has determined that in order to protect their Nation from COVID-19 that they are not allowing non-residents to access the community of Bella Coola. This decision to not allow access includes non-resident commercial fishermen and extends to Bella Coola's marine infrastructure (wharfs, fuel station, ice plant etc)

Area C Harvest Committee supports the Fishermen-Community Interaction Protocols developed by the COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee and believes that the implementation of these Protocols minimizes the risk of COVID-19 spread to small, rural, fishing communities. However, we also respect the Nuxalk determination to close Bella Coola as a further safety precaution from the COVID-19 virus.

To support the Nuxalk Nation's decision, Area C Harvest Committee declares Bella Coola to be off-limits to non-resident commercial fishermen and we ask for DFO's cooperation to implement the following points to address the COVID-19 crises.

1. DFO has postponed the first openings in Area 8. Area C Harvest Committee, fish buyers and DFO will use this time to communicate with Area C fishermen about the closure of Bella Coola and fishermen's responsibilities as below.
2. The inner most boundary for gillnetting for chinook or chum salmon in Area 8 (Bella Coola area) will initially be changed in the 2020 season, only, due to the COVID-19 pandemic crises, and will be moved further away from Bella Coola. The inner most fishing boundary, initially, shall be from Coffee Creek to the eastern most point of Whiskey Bay (A line extending Northward from a point at the East end of Whiskey Bay, 52° 21.931'N and 126° 52.076'W to a point located at 52° 22.828'N and 126° 52.317'W, approximately 2nm East of Bachelor Bay).
3. This line is a fishing boundary but shall also be respected as a **COVID-19 Community Quarantine Boundary**. No one other than residents of Bella Coola can be on the community side (inland side) of this boundary. Commercial fishermen and packers cannot tie up, fuel up, grub up, ice up, deliver fish, unload or pick up any item from Bella Coola, or the surrounding area. The result of this boundary is that non-resident gillnet fisherman will remain at least six miles away from Bella Coola township at all times. To discern residents from non-residents, a resident will fly a white flag from the topmost mast.
4. If gillnetters do not respect the **Community Quarantine Boundary**, the Area 8 gillnet fishery may be closed.
5. Into the season, and if the **COVID-19 Community Quarantine Boundary** has been fully respected, the gillnet fishing boundary may be moved to the normal Area 8 gillnet boundary line as long as non-residents' vessels remain seaward of the **Community Quarantine Boundary** when not fishing.

6. Fish Buyers will not purchase salmon from a non-resident fisherman who breaks the **COVID-19 Community Quarantine** by crossing over the **COVID-19 Community Quarantine Boundary**. The Bella Coola Small Craft Harbour Authority has closed their floats to non-resident vessels and we are asking that pictures of any gillnetter violating the **Community Quarantine boundary** will be taken and forwarded to DFO who will distribute to all companies buying in Area 8.
7. There will be no trucks packing salmon out or supplies for fishermen in through Bella Coola.
8. If a fisherman is seriously injured or becomes seriously ill and needs urgent medical attention they should phone the local health authority and notify the Canadian Coast Guard Marine Emergency and/or BC Ambulance office for direction.
9. If a fisherman has a minor injury or feels unwell they should go to Port Hardy and contact the local health authority there before landing.
10. Non-resident fishermen will not access fuel, water, ice, parts or any provisions from Bella Coola. They can be purchased directly in Port Hardy or Shearwater and orders should be emailed or phoned in to the appropriate store/wharfinger before landing.
  - Follow Shearwater's protocol for fuel, water and provisions.
  - If Port Hardy does not have a separate protocol, follow the one posted on the BC CDC. Follow any directions given by Port Hardy Harbour AuthorityPackers may bring supplies to the fishing grounds; contact your buyer for details
11. Seine vessel will not travel any further north of Kwatna Inlet

**Simple rules for non-resident gillnetters:**

1. Fish within the fishing boundary.
2. Stay out of Bella Coola. During non-fishing times, no gillnet vessel shall cross over the **COVID-19 Community Quarantine Boundary** line (Coffee Creek to the eastern most point of Whiskey Bay) for any reason. During fishing times, remain within fishing boundaries.
3. If there is a serious and urgent medical emergency contact CCG and the local health authority.