



3 August 2022

Debra Myles
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada / Government of Canada
Senior Advisor / Strategic and Regional Assessment
RegionalAssessmentRequest-DemandeEvaluationRegionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

Re: Phased Regional Impact Assessment for Fraser River Estuary and Salish Sea

Dear Debra Myles,

I'm writing on behalf of the Executive Office of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) in support of the request from the Salish Sea Indigenous Guardians Association for a phased Regional Impact Assessment of the Fraser River Estuary and Salish Sea region. The Fraser River estuary is a location of global significance for the conservation of migratory birds and has received numerous global designations reflecting the significance of the site.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) is a site-based shorebird conservation initiative whose mission is to conserve shorebirds and their habitats through a network of key sites across the Americas. The network is comprised of hundreds of partners working at 114 sites in 18 countries to conserve and manage over 15 million hectares of critical habitats for shorebirds. The Fraser River Estuary is a WHSRN site of Hemispheric Importance (the highest level of significance for shorebird conservation), designated in 2005.

The Government of Canada describes Regional Impact Assessments as "...studies conducted in areas of existing projects or anticipated development to inform planning and management of cumulative effects and inform project impact assessments. Regional assessments allow the Government of Canada to go beyond project-focused impact assessments to understand the regional context and provide more comprehensive analyses to help inform future impact assessment decisions." The Salish Sea Indigenous Guardians Association has formally requested Canada undertake a Regional Impact Assessment including both the Fraser River Estuary and Salish Sea.

The WHSRN Executive Office, together with our conservation partners have identified the Fraser River Estuary as a key site within the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network due to its importance for shorebirds in general, and the Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) in particular. To support the Impacts Assessment Agency we are able to work with Birds Canada to

provide the Impact Assessment Agency data on Western Sandpiper and other shorebirds collected through ongoing monitoring efforts.

The WHSRN Executive Office believes that working with the Coast Salish Nations to implement a phased Regional Impact Assessment that includes consideration of the cumulative effects on birds and bird habitat will help ensure the Government of Canada and the Coast Salish Nations have an understanding of what is needed to maintain a functional estuary and a broader Salish Sea capable of supporting communities and the millions of migratory birds that rely on the Fraser River Estuary.

Yours sincerely,

<original signed by>

Rob P. Clay, Ph.D
Director, Executive Office
Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network
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