

## **MP encouraged by judicial inquiry into missing sockeye**

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The federal government announced this week that a judicial inquiry would look into the disappearance of millions of sockeye salmon from the Fraser River.

"The establishment of a judicial inquiry into the management of the Fraser River sockeye fishery gives new hope for the future of a great salmon river," said Delta-Richmond East MP John Cummins.

The Fraser River salmon fishery has suffered over the last decade as the sockeye mysteriously disappeared. In six out of the last 11 years, the fishery has been closed.

Cummins said clear warning signs of an impending environmental disaster are evident.

"The crisis has moved well beyond the old disputes over who gets what percentage of the total allowable catch," he said. "It is now the very survival of the species that is at risk."

The mystery of the disappearance of B.C. salmon has been deepened by the fact that other Pacific fishing grounds in Russia, Alaska and Japan are reporting higher-than-expected harvests.

"Fraser sockeye must not be allowed to go the way of the Atlantic cod," said Cummins, a former commercial fisherman. "The announcement of this judicial inquiry shows a prime minister committed to resolving this environmental challenge to the Fraser River sockeye and taking the necessary steps so that it is again the world's greatest sockeye river."

Federal Trade Minister Stockwell Day, who is also the regional

minister for B.C., was in Vancouver yesterday to name the judge who will head the inquiry and to announce the terms of reference.

The government will ask the inquiry, which will have the legal power to compel witnesses to testify, to begin work early in the new year and report back to Ottawa by May 2011.

"A judicial inquiry will empower the justice of the B.C. Supreme Court to impartially hear the evidence, call testimony under oath and make recommendations to ensure the future of the fishery," Cummins said.

"If we are able to avert an environmental catastrophe on the Fraser, we must be able to find out what happened and to ensure that mistakes are not repeated," he said. "Only a judicial inquiry will get the job done."

*With files from the Vancouver Sun*

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