

# **The Effects of Buy-Back Programs in the British Columbia Salmon Fishery**

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## **Abstract**

Policymakers have implemented five distinct buybacks of either vessels or salmon licenses over the past three decades in the British Columbia (BC) salmon fishery. This paper reviews the circumstances under which these buybacks were conducted with an emphasis on their impact on reducing fishing capacity and effort. In particular, we focus on the two most recent buybacks that took place in 1996 and 1998-2000. We investigate how the licensing program for salmon fishing in BC has evolved and how that has shaped the design and operation of these buyback programs. We consider what has been learned in these buyback programs and what the buybacks have achieved in the salmon fishery. One of the principal lessons learned is that these buybacks reduce capacity in a manner that is seen as equitable by fishers and enjoys their political support (albeit under certain conditions). Therefore, they offer a way to implement new policies that addresses the issue of existing rights, thereby overcoming some of the traditional barriers to policy change.