



Fish Farm Ban for BC's North Coast, More Farms for South

The BC government announced an indefinite moratorium on open net-cage salmon farming in northern BC waters in late March along with the approvals of two more farms on the south coast, in Clayoquot and Nootka Sounds.

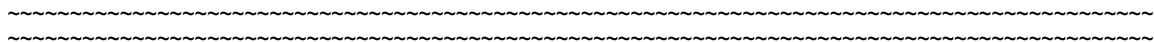
"This is a monumental day for northern BC's salmon and the communities that depend on them," said Des Nobels of T.Buck Suzuki Foundation, a CAAR member group in Prince Rupert. "The people of the north, who hold their wild salmon in high esteem, worked hard to make their wishes clear to government. But this announcement is just the first step in addressing the concerns of all British Columbians about the threats posed by the salmon farming industry to the future of our wild salmon."

It is a huge turning point that the provincial government is recognizing the need to protect marine ecosystems and wild salmon stocks and CAAR thanks all of our supporters who have helped make the issue of salmon farming impacts impossible to ignore. We would also like to congratulate our allies, Friends of Wild Salmon, who have brought together diverse northern residents to send a loud and clear message that northerners want wild salmon not salmon farms!

While congratulating Minister Bell and his government on their decision to enact one key recommendation of the Legislature's Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture (SCSA), CAAR is troubled by the disregard shown for the health of BC's south coast with the two new farm approvals and lack of action on the implementation of closed containment recommended as an immediate need by the SCSA.

"If net-cage salmon farming is not appropriate for our northern waters, why is it still permitted in the south?" asked Catherine Stewart of the Living Oceans Society, a CAAR member group. "It is imperative that the province act to move salmon farms in the south to closed containment before the wild pink and chum salmon fall into localized extinctions."

Read more about CAAR's plans to bring the call for closed containment to coastal communities below.



Clayoquot Sound has Sea Lice

"Something's going on in Clayoquot Sound. ...Something's wrong. We don't know what it is." Wilf Luedke, South Coast Director for Department of Fisheries and Oceans in reference to the extremely low numbers of Chinook salmon. (Westcoaster.ca 2008/3/21)

Alexandra Morton has been the driving force behind much of the sea lice science published in British Columbia. With her excellent reputation as a diligent scientist and dedicated protector of marine ecosystems, when BC residents spot trouble around fish farms, Morton is often the first person they think to call.



Wild Salmon: The backbone of the BC Coast
PHOTO: Ian McCallister/Pacificwild.org

In mid-January a commercial fisherman did just that, he called Morton to report a heavy sea lice infestation on a Mainstream-owned salmon farm at Dixon Point in Clayoquot Sound. Morton called on several dedicated colleagues, arranged a plankton net, and had the team conduct plankton tows near the Dixon Point farm, then send the plankton samples to her for analysis.

There were more free-swimming larval-stage sea lice in the sample taken near the Dixon Point farm than had ever been collected in a single plankton tow in the Broughton Archipelago.

Peer-reviewed research on sea lice impacts suggests the planktonic sea lice numbers recorded in the waters near the Dixon Point fish farm would result in heavy lice infestation of wild juvenile salmon out-migrating from the nearby Megin River. While most of the sea lice research has been done on pink and chum salmon, sockeye, steelhead, Chinook and Coho can also be badly infected.

Just this week Morton published [new research](#) in the *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* showing sea lice outbreaks are infecting juvenile sockeye salmon and herring in the Discovery Islands area off the east coast of Vancouver Island near Campbell River. These stocks are some of the most lucrative in the province, Campbell River sockeye and herring were worth nearly \$80 million for the province last year.

With research showing that more wild salmon stocks are at risk of lethal sea lice infestations, it is clear that neither the government nor the industry or taking adequate measures to protect our wild salmon. Multiple salmon farms are sited on every wild salmon migration route through Clayoquot Sound. All Broughton, East Coast Vancouver Island, South Coast Mainland and northbound Fraser River salmon also migrate through salmon farming areas to reach the ocean.

Sea lice are not the only threat facing wild salmon, but outbreaks do appear capable of pushing stressed stocks into oblivion. Unlike many issues affecting wild salmon, like the impact of climate change on ocean temperatures, sea lice are easily dealt with - open net-cage fish farms cannot be by our wild salmon rivers.

Mainstream, Creative Salmon and First Nations have been collecting sea lice data on wild juvenile salmon in Clayoquot Sound since 2003. These data are finally being analyzed this summer and a report will be made public by the winter. The data are needed to assess the risk Clayoquot Sound salmon farms pose to wild salmon.

Closing in on Sustainable Salmon Farming CAAR Takes Closed Containment on the Road

Last May the BC government's Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture (SCSA) recommended all BC salmon farms be transitioned to closed containment technology by 2012. Since that time, interest in closed containment has been on the rise. The Agrimarine project in Campbell River has earned repeated national coverage for their floating, solid-walled tank system being constructed to rear salmon and more entrepreneurs are looking to BC as a place to start closed containment aquaculture facilities.



Ocean-based tanks near Campbell River, BC
PHOTO: Middle Bay Sustainable Aquaculture Institute

Ocean-based closed containment has been recommended for BC because it would help address many of the environmental impacts of open net-cages, including sea lice epidemics, marine mammal deaths, disease transfer, fish farm waste and escaped fish. Reducing the environmental impacts of aquaculture would help keep wild salmon and marine life healthier, good news for First Nations, fishermen and tourism operators.

The growing interest in closed containment as a viable technology could greatly benefit coastal communities. Will Soltau of Living Oceans Society and the Georgia Strait Alliance's Michelle Young have prepared a travelling presentation, *Closing in on*

Sustainable Salmon Farming, to give communities better insight into what closed containment technology is all about, how it can benefit communities and provide working examples from around the world.

Beginning in April, presentations will be made available to interested groups upon request. From fish and game clubs to local governments and First Nations, if you would like to know more about closed containment technology please book a presentation. The tour will begin on Vancouver Island, with the potential to extend further afield.

"The benefits of progressing to closed containment would be immediate to the ecosystem, and ultimately to our coastal economy" says Will Soltau, LOS Local Campaigner. "In the longer term we'd all win. BC innovators will be at the leading edge of 21st century sustainable aquaculture technology and we can help protect our wild salmon."

If your organization or community would like to book a *Closing in on Sustainable Salmon Farming* presentation, please contact:

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Michelle Young: michelle@georgiastrait.org 250-753-3459

Want to see more closed containment in BC? Encourage the BC government to include a fund for closed containment in their next budget - [send a fax here.](#)

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