



## British Columbia is salmon country

Known around the world for its spectacular natural setting, iconic wildlife and rich First Nations culture, 'super, natural' British Columbia has flourished on the foundation of keystone species, wild salmon.

Covering almost a million square kilometres, British Columbia is larger than California, Oregon and Washington states combined. For thousands of years hundreds of salmon rivers have run like veins through every reach of the province from the southern US border to Alaska, enriching and sustaining 137 different species – from towering thousand-year-old cedar trees, orca whales, bald eagles, grizzly and black bears to human beings.

But today, wild salmon and the ecosystem that depends on them are in crisis. The 2009 Fraser River sockeye collapse, where only 1.3 million wild salmon returned to spawn instead of an expected 10 million, is only the most recent disaster.

While there are many potential factors contributing to this decline such as loss of habitat, and warming waters due to climate change, the establishment of open net-cage salmon farms on the BC coast are heavily implicated. Studies have shown that the presence of open net-cage salmon farms can reduce wild salmon survival by more than 50 per cent per generation.

Wild salmon are the foundation of all that British Columbia has to offer and as they continue to decline, so does the province. Conservationists, salmon-stream walkers and ecotourism guides located along British Columbia's central coast have indicated that a collapse of salmon runs has triggered widespread death from starvation of black and grizzly bears. Some spawning grounds, normally full of salmon and bears, are empty.

For 10,000 years, First Nations of BC relied on the sea to provide for their people. Supported by the once plentiful marine resources, these communities developed vibrant cultures rich in song, dance and art works that are acclaimed worldwide. Now, First Nations are unable to access enough salmon for their dietary, social, economic and cultural needs.

Wild salmon declines also put BC's economy in jeopardy. Tourism employs 117,900 people in the province and adds \$9.8 billion a year to the BC economy. In coastal regions such as the Great Bear Rainforest, much of the tourism industry relies on the health of the ecosystem. Wild salmon form the foundation of these coastal systems, nurturing the growth of ancient stream-side forests and providing a key food source for species on land and in the sea. Tourism activities based around wildlife—from viewing to sports fishing—depend on the abundance of species to attract visitors from around the world.

Commercial, sport and aboriginal fisheries combined generate at least 16,000 jobs in BC, many more than the salmon farming industry provides. These wild fisheries contribute \$1 billion yearly to the BC economy, a contribution threatened by expansion of salmon farming.

The future prosperity of British Columbia is inextricably linked to the survival and sustainability of wild salmon. Open net-cage salmon farming is the one factor within our immediate control to change, and these practices must be transitioned to sustainable closed containment systems immediately.

## wild salmon the foundation of coastal life

Formed in 2001, the *Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR)* is a coalition of five member groups working to ensure salmon farming in British Columbia is safe for wild salmon, marine ecosystems, coastal communities and human health.

Members:

**David Suzuki Foundation**

**Georgia Strait Alliance**

**Living Oceans Society**

**T. Buck Suzuki Foundation**

**Watershed Watch Salmon Society**

**[www.farmedanddangerous.org](http://www.farmedanddangerous.org)**

