



## first nations & coastal communities: futures threatened by salmon farms

For the past 10,000 years, coastal First Nations of British Columbia have relied on the sea to provide for their people. Supported by the plentiful marine resources, First Nations communities developed vibrant cultures rich in song, dance and art works that are acclaimed worldwide.

Abundant runs of wild salmon, together with the harvest of other seafood, fed entire villages. Village beaches still gleam white with sun-bleached shells, reminiscent of bountiful harvests. Rockfish, abalone, cockles, eulachon and countless other marine species were staple food items.

All of this is in jeopardy. The establishment of salmon farms on the BC coast has had a disastrous effect on First Nations' traditional ways of life. Sea lice infestations from salmon farms threaten the survival of wild salmon runs.<sup>1</sup> Re-

cent, independent science has confirmed elevated levels of mercury in rockfish near salmon farms.<sup>2</sup> As a result, children and women of child-bearing age have been advised to restrict their consumption of this customary food. Clam beaches near salmon farms are covered with sludge and contaminated with decomposing fish feces and waste food from the farms, leaving the once pink and healthy clams black and inedible.



*First Nations protest salmon farms in their territory.  
Photo: Beltra/Greenpeace*

### COASTAL ALLIANCE FOR AQUACULTURE REFORM

David Suzuki Foundation • Friends of Clayoquot Sound • Georgia Strait Alliance • Living Oceans Society  
Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council • Raincoast Conservation Society • Raincoast Research  
T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation • Watershed Watch Salmon Society  
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First Nations who harvest returning wild salmon from the inland rivers are just as affected by the threat salmon farms pose to the abundance of wild stocks. The risk of losing such a valuable source of food has led many inland First Nations to join coastal Nations in challenging the issuance of new salmon farm licenses.

The majority of coastal First Nations in BC want the existing open net-cage farms phased out. They support an end to expansion of the industry into new regions, and where farms already exist, support a transition to closed containment systems that will control pollution and end threats to wild marine species.

First Nation communities are not the only ones feeling the impacts of salmon farms. Tourism adds \$1 billion a year to the BC economy.<sup>3</sup> 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, such as wolves and orcas. 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,<sup>4</sup> a contribution threatened by expansion of salmon farming. In northern BC, a report by IBM Consulting concluded the annual value of wild salmon to the Skeena River region alone is approximately \$120 million.<sup>5</sup> The expansion of open net-cage salmon farming into this area would jeopardize wild salmon stocks and the economic viability of businesses that rely on them.



Sports fishing on the BC coast. Photo: John Brouwer

In short, BC's coastal communities are inextricably linked to the wild salmon—through their cultures, economies and traditional food sources. Salmon farms, by threatening the very survival of the wild stocks, are putting the future security of these communities at risk.

<sup>1</sup>For example: Krkosek, M., M.A. Lewis, A. Morton, L.N. Frazer and J.P. Volpe. (2006). Epizootics of wild fish induced by farmed fish. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*. 103:15506-15510. Morton, A. and R. D. Routledge (2005). Mortality rates for Juvenile Pink Oncorhynchus gorbuscha and Chum O. keta salmon infested with Sea Lice *Lepeophtheirus salmonis* in the Broughton Archipelago. *The Alaska Fisheries Research Bulletin*. 11(2): 146-152.

<sup>2</sup>DeBruyn, A.M., M. Trudel, N. Eyding, J. Harding, H. McNally, R. Mountain, C. Orr, D. Urban, S. Verenitch and A. Mazumder. (2006). Ecosystemic effects of salmon farming increase mercury contamination in wild fish. *Environmental Science and Technology*. 40(11): 3489-3493.

<sup>3</sup>Research Services, Tourism British Columbia (2005). *Characteristics of the Commercial Nature-Based Tourism Industry in British Columbia*. Prepared in cooperation with the Wilderness Tourism Association.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, D. (2003). *Fishy Business: The Economics of Salmon Farming in BC*. Prepared by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

<sup>5</sup>IBM: Business Consulting (2006). *Valuation of the Wild Salmon Economy of the Skeena River Watershed*. Prepared for the Northwest Institute for Bioregional Institute.

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