



Joint Press Release



Wild Fish Conservancy NORTHWEST

Date: Thursday, May 24, 2018

Time: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Where: Grandview Calvary Baptist Church

1803 1st Avenue, Vancouver, BC (near Commercial Drive)

Re: Urgent Call for International Collaboration for a Fish Farm Free Pacific Coast

The Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance and the Wild Fish Conservancy Northwest are hosting a joint press conference regarding the need for international collaboration to phase out Atlantic salmon farms on the Pacific coast. Speakers on the issues will include Kurt Beardslee of Wild Fish Conservancy Northwest, Washington, Eddie Gardner of Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance, Shane John, fisherman from Chawathil First Nation, Dr. Claudette Bethune, clinical scientist, Karen Wristen, Living Oceans, Reverend Laurel Dystra, Anglican Church, Hereditary Chief George Quocksister Jr., and Ernest Alfred, traditional leader of Namgis Nation.

In response to the escape of some 263,000 invasive Atlantic salmon in Puget Sound, Gov. Jay Inslee of Washington State signed a bill that will phase out marine farming of Atlantic salmon and other non-native fish by 2022. "This decision will give wild salmon a fighting chance and will assist Washington's efforts to restore and enhance wild salmon, which are vital to the economy and the ecological integrity of the Pacific coast," said Kurt Beardslee. Democrat Senator Kevin Ranker agrees, but noted that an American ban would be less effective in the shared ecosystem of the Salish Sea if fish farms continue to operate and expand in Canadian waters.

Wild salmon swim across international borders, migrate long distances, and spend several years at sea. The Pacific Salmon Treaty and Pacific Salmon Commission were created to address issues related to the harvest of salmon intercepted by Canadian or American fishermen before they return to their native spawning grounds. As wild salmon are also being intercepted by pathogens from open net pen Atlantic salmon farms, there are calls for the commission to explore a science-based approach to aquaculture, and move it to land containment. "The Pacific Salmon Treaty negotiations are underway, and I can't see how this will not factor into those discussions. If a government is making responsible decisions to safeguard such a sacred species as salmon, how could the British Columbia government not collaborate with Washington to phase out ocean fish farms," stated Bob Chamberlin, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation Chief and Vice President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

Irrefutable scientific evidence generated in both Canada and the USA proves that fish farms are adversely impacting endangered wild salmon with highly contagious pathogens like the Piscine Reovirus of Norwegian origin. Justice Bruce Cohen warned of this possibility in his 2012 report on the collapse of sockeye salmon runs in 2009. A scientific paper released by Dr. Kristi Miller-Saunders and a team of scientists from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the University of British Columbia (UBC), confirms that Piscine Orthoreovirus (PRV) can cause rupture of red blood cells, resulting in anemia and potentially causing lethal kidney and liver disease in Chinook salmon. The PRV is widespread throughout Atlantic salmon open-net pen farms in Puget Sound and British Columbia. "This is shocking scientific evidence that proves fish farms harm wild salmon by releasing contagious

diseases that cannot be controlled in open-net pen technology,” declared Chief Robert Gladstone of Shxwá:y First Nation.

“The Musgamagw, Namgis and Mamalilikulla people, long opposed to open net pen fish farms in their territories, as well as First Nations along the Fraser river, would welcome this report as it supports the removal of fish farms from the migratory routes of wild salmon, and recommends a move to land-based aquaculture,” emphasized Shane John of Chawathil First Nation, situated near Hope, BC.

“To date, we are extremely disappointed in the province’s delay tactics and failure to act to announce fish farms will not be renewed June 20. They continue to allow fish farms to stock their open net pens, and have not stopped blood water from pouring into the ocean and harming migrating fry,” exclaimed Ernest Alfred of Namgis Nation.

“This is a human rights issue. We support Indigenous Nations that have never given their consent to have fish farms in their territories as they witness their traditional food source collapse around those pens,” said Reverend Mellissa Skelton of the Anglican Church.

First Nations people and other citizens on both sides of the border are not the only ones who have lost confidence in the federal government’s ability to regulate the aquaculture industry. After years of cumulative evidence that fish farms are doing harm to wild fish, more recently, the Environmental Commissioner of Canada reported that the federal government isn’t doing enough to manage the risks associated with salmon farming – and is failing to set national standards to prevent fish escapes and regulate how much drugs and pesticides companies can use. This refutes any claim that Canada has a strict regulatory aquaculture regime.

The majority of British Columbians (9 out of 10 in a recent poll) see it is necessary to remove fish farms from the ocean and transition to land-based aquaculture. In a few short weeks, more than 11,000 people from all backgrounds signed the Declaration in Defence of Salmon in a show of widespread support in asking John Horgan to give our wild salmon a chance by not renewing Atlantic salmon farm tenures come June 20, 2018. Clearly, there is widespread public support for phasing out fish farms in Pacific waters.

“Due to the failure of the federal and provincial governments to protect wild salmon from fish farms, we feel we have no option but to take matters into our own hands, and will be inspecting the waters around the farms for evidence of disease and illegal by-catch of baby fish,” stated Hereditary Chief George Quocksister Jr.

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