

NEWS RELEASE

DFO Fails to Prosecute Illegal Fish Farm

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VICTORIA, BC – The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has failed to lay charges against an illegally stocked fish farm north of Port Hardy for damaging the habitat of a threatened species.

“We continue to call on DFO to lay charges against Omega Salmon Group Ltd, now that the provincial government has fined the company for operating the salmon farm without a license,” said Georgia Strait Alliance program coordinator, Suzanne Connell.

The farm operated illegally above prime abalone habitat for nearly two months. DFO found that the operation harmed native abalone beds below the site. Abalone is a threatened species under Canada’s Species At Risk Act and a ban on abalone fishing has existed for over a decade.

“The Federal Government must enforce the law and prosecute this company,” said Connell. “Omega has managed to violate the federal Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act without any repercussions.”

Omega faced a maximum penalty of \$10,000 a day for violating provincial fisheries law during the period of March 13 to May 8, 2002, when it had fish illegally in the water. It received a \$5,500 fine, a mere hand-slap considering the charge, under Section 13.5 of the Provincial Fisheries Act, could have been as high as half a million dollars.

The Georgia Strait Alliance is a marine conservation organization that works to preserve and protect the Georgia Strait and its adjoining waters. The group is a member of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) – a coalition of conservation and First Nations groups working to protect the ocean and humans from detrimental impacts from salmon farming. For more information visit www.farmedanddangerous.org

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