

NEWS RELEASE

Broughton Archipelago Pink Salmon Are Missing Again

Predicted impact of sea lice from fish farms becoming a reality

September 24, 2003: For immediate release

Broughton Archipelago, BC - While pink salmon are returning in healthy numbers throughout British Columbia, the rivers of the Broughton Archipelago, off the northeast coast of Vancouver Island, remain virtually empty for the second year in a row, say First Nations and conservationists.

According to Department of Fisheries and Oceans data, in four rivers there is a drastic decline, while in three there is a substantial decline that is worthy of concern. The seven rivers affected are the Embly, Kingcome, Ahta, Kakweikan, Ahunhati, Klinaklini and Glendale.

“My research predicted a 90 per cent collapse of these salmon as a result of epidemic sea lice infections that are only found near fish farms,” says Alexandra Morton, an independent researcher who lives and works in the region. “In the streams closest to the fish farms, this is exactly what we are seeing. Even Fisheries and Oceans Canada predicted low returns this year as a result of sea lice.”

With growing evidence that fish farms cause sea lice outbreaks, which in turn infect and often kill juvenile wild salmon, many people are wondering why the federal and provincial governments are allowing open net-cage fish farms to expand on this coast. If the fish-farming industry expands as planned, salmon runs on the Central and North Coast could face the same collapse, First Nations and conservationists fear.

“Open net-cage fish farms are a threat to our wild salmon, marine ecosystem, and traditional way of life,” says Chief Bill Cranmer, Chair of the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council. “What are we leaving our children if the rivers are empty?”

Conservation groups and First Nations say new technologies that use closed-containment systems may allay some of their fears, but the salmon farming industry is extremely reluctant to try these new systems and practices.

“Industry is not listening to First Nations, scientific opinion or the environmental community, but they will listen to consumers,” says Jennifer Lash of the Living Oceans Society. “Therefore we have no choice but to ask consumers not to eat farmed salmon until it is safe for us and safe for the ocean.”

To view a map of the Broughton Archipelago showing the affected streams and the location of the fish farms visit www.farmedanddangerous.org/media

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