

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE

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FNLN CALLS FOR END TO OPEN-NET PEN SALMON FARMING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



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The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) is calling for an end to all open-net pen salmon farming in the province. Reports published by fish farm owners Mowi, Cermaq and Grieg, indicated 37% of salmon farms across all regions exceeded government-mandated sea lice limits. In a recent independent study, 94% of sampled juvenile wild salmon migrating through the Discovery Islands were infected with the parasite, which is lethal to the fish.

“We have known for years that open-net pen salmon farming is one of the main contributors to the massive decline in wild salmon stocks in this province,” said BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “The federal and provincial governments have been taking a piecemeal approach to this problem, with long timeframes for transition to closed containment pens, and only in a few places. We need to end salmon farming in our open oceans now to protect both wild salmon and Indigenous ways of being from extinction.”

Salmon is central to First Nations cultures and economies in much of British Columbia. Salmon stocks have steadily declined at an alarming rate, leaving some runs functionally extinct. A variety of factors are responsible for the drop in salmon stocks, including overfishing, climate change, sediment from industrial forestry, natural disasters such as the 2029 Big Bar Slide, and the introduction of pathogens including heart and Skeletal Muscle Inflammation (HSMI), Piscine Orthoreovirus (PRV), and hazardous levels of parasitic sea lice.

The Cohen Commission, which published its landmark study on how to reverse the decline of Fraser River salmon in 2012, recommended shutting the open-net farms in the Discovery Islands by September 30, 2020 if they continued to pose a risk to wild salmon. Recent research and the fish farming corporations’ own data confirm that the farms are actively contributing to plummeting wild salmon stocks, and these farms need to be closed.

“We’ve been watching wild pacific salmon slowly go extinct for decades. While it may take more time to tackle climate change, or change how we conduct forestry operations in the province, we know for certain that moving salmon farming onto land in closed pens will have a positive impact on salmon populations. Now we just need to make it happen,” said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit political executive”

“No more excuses, distractions, or delays – open-net fish farms are decimating wild salmon populations and First Nations’ ways of life are on the line,” stated Chief Dalton Silver, Sumas First Nation and Union of BC Indian Chiefs Fisheries Representative. “We need a collaborative, cooperative transition to land-based containment with First Nations leading in order to conserve and protect the species vital to our communities.”

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Media kit available at:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19Ij-Dn46tuZzslxp_Dy3kO2i0KuwBrwd?usp=sharing

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