farmed and dangerous

Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform

# Backgrounder # 3 Sept.28 2005

## Solutions

**Short Term: Fallowing**

Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the BC Provincial Government must immediately initiate the development and implementation of a Sea Lice Action Plan for the January, 2006 out-migration of juvenile wild salmon in the Broughton Archipelago. It is essential that both levels of government instruct the fish farms companies to adjust their management plans to facilitate the creation of a Fife-Tribune Channel safe migration route for the period of January to June 2006.

Fallowing the farms, or emptying them of all fish, is the only viable short-term way to create a safe migration route and prevent the high levels of sea-lice infestation devastating wild juvenile salmon in the region. .

The Sea Lice Action Plan development process must be undertaken in cooperation with Marine Harvest and Mainstream Aquaculture, the two salmon farming companies operating along the proposed Broughton fallow route, as well as representatives of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), First Nations, the tourism industry, commercial fishermen, and local residents.

The establishment of a fallow route is a short-term emergency measure to address the immediate need of a safe migration route for the Broughton juvenile pink salmon migrating out to sea in the spring of 2006. Local knowledge and scientific research indicate the majority of these out-migrating fish use the northern Fife - Tribune channel route to reach open water.

In 2003, the BC ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) ordered farm fallowing in the Broughton Archipelago. Fallowing requires that open net cages on salmon farms remain empty during the migrating of wild juvenile salmon from January to June.

Published and peer reviewed research[1] indicates that fallowing is an effective tool to manage the transfer of sea lice from salmon farms to juvenile wild salmon.

[1] Temporal patterns of sea lice infestation on wild pacific salmon in relation to fallowing of Atlantic salmon farms. Morton, Routledge and Williams 2005

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Impacts from sea-lice infestations on one single farm on a salmon migration route can affect juvenile salmon for distances up to 30 kilometres from the farm[2].

Although, the fallowing in 2003 drastically reduced the occurrence of sea lice on the juvenile wild salmon migrating to sea that season, the fallowing plan was never repeated. Sea-lice levels on migrating juvenile salmon have once again reached lethal amounts and many rivers in the Broughton region continue to experience drastically low levels of returns of pink salmon.

**Long Term Solution: Closed Containment**

The Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform is calling for a transition to closed containment aquaculture. Floating or land-based closed tank systems with non-permeable barriers can be used to prevent the transmission of disease, parasites, waste and fish escapes from the farms to the marine environment. This protects the marine environment from the salmon farming operation and provides economic benefits because the farmed fish are protected from external diseases and parasites.

BC has the potential to become a world leader in closed containment salmon farming technology, which will provide a much more sustainable salmon farming industry. State of the art technologies for enclosed fish farms have been developed in BC and Washington State.

To assist fish farm companies through this process, governments should offer tax incentives, loans and grant programs. In addition, an environmental levy on current production from net cage operations should be created to establish a fund for financing closed contained systems**.**

CAAR is calling on the provincial and federal governments to support a full-scale operational trial of closed containment systems to fully assess the ecological and economic viability of this technology.

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[2] Martin Krkosek, John Volpe,Mark Lewis-March 30/2005 Proceedings of the Royal Society B

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