



Broughton Stocks Sink

Returns of most salmon stocks off B.C.'s coast were poor in 2008, marking a continued decline of the five salmon species caught in commercial fisheries. Habitat loss, over-fishing and unfavourable ocean conditions have all contributed to the current state of Pacific salmon, but another known problem—sea lice—continues to devastate pink salmon stocks in the Broughton Archipelago. DFO surveys conducted this fall indicate dismal returns of spawning pink salmon. Numbers dropped as much as 90 per cent at five key indicator streams, and constituted only about 2 percent of pink salmon abundance in the year 2000. In Glendale Creek, a primary indicator stream, only 15,000 spawners were counted this year, compared with 182,000 last year. Research published in the prestigious journal, *Science*, in 2007 connected the decline in Broughton wild salmon stocks to the region's salmon farms. The study showed that the louse-induced mortality of wild pink salmon is over 80 percent, and predicted local extinction in four generations (or 2015) if outbreaks continue.

Sharp declines in pink salmon populations are already having a cascading effect on the marine food chain and the \$1.5 billion wilderness tourism sector. This fall, tourism operators who run whale-watching, bear-viewing and sport-fishing resorts are reporting tough times because of dwindling salmon runs. In the Broughton, some of the northern killer whale pods did not show up this summer; in the south, nine killer whales disappeared—biological evidence suggests they starved to death. Resident killer whales feed mainly on large Chinook salmon, which in turn feed on smaller fish species like juvenile pink salmon. Grizzly bears also feed voraciously on spawning pink salmon to build weight for hibernation, but according to several Knight Inlet grizzly-bear viewing businesses, this year the starving bears are lucky to catch one salmon a day.

SOS Network Grows

Director/Founder Eric Hobson hosted four events for the Save Our Salmon Initiative in October and November. Special thanks to our generous Calgary sponsors—Jack Thrasher for the October 22 luncheon and Charlotte Fredericks for the October 23 luncheon. The Calgary events continued to build support for the SOS Initiative, as did the two luncheons held at the Vancouver Aquarium in November. Attendees heard from B.C. ecologist Dr. Craig Orr, who presented the latest scientific research into the negative impacts of open net-cage salmon farms on wild salmon and the coastal ecosystem, and from Chief Bob Chamberlin of the Kwikwaka'wakw Ah-kwa-mish First Nation, who spoke about how the traditional fisheries collapse in B.C.'s Broughton Archipelago threatens the future of First Nations in the area.

The SOS Initiative, and its growing network of Canadian business leaders and philanthropists, offer support and resources to government and industry to help create an environmentally sustainable aquaculture industry, while at the same time providing solutions that eliminate threats to wild salmon stocks posed by open net-cage salmon farming. Our strong preference is to fund solutions rather than litigation. However, time is short, as some wild salmon stocks are already imperilled. Your support is critical in enabling SOS to carry through with the strategy.

The SOS Initiative relies on the ongoing financial support of many committed individuals who are helping us demonstrate that solutions exist, and that our network has the ability and resources to ensure they are realized. To learn more and lend your support, please visit our website at www.saveoursalmon.ca and click the "Donate Now" button on the homepage. For more information, contact Eric Hobson at eric@saveoursalmon.ca.

SOS Seeks to Meet with Premier

This fall, SOS formally requested a meeting with Premier Gordon Campbell. The purpose of the meeting is to offer our network's collective experience and resources in pursuing business-oriented solutions to preserving B.C.'s wild salmon stocks. Our network has developed a series of strategic initiatives that can assist the Premier in building a globally renowned salmon aquaculture industry that is positioned to take advantage of growing market demand for both wild and sustainably-farmed salmon.

We believe that our unique approach and proposed solutions will be of particular interest to Premier Campbell because of his leadership on environmental issues and acknowledgement that "going green" can create more jobs.

Fish Farms Seek Expansion

The Globe and Mail reported in November that the fish-farming industry in B.C. is looking for government approval to increase productivity at more than 20 different sites in the Broughton Archipelago and the northern Georgia Strait; at least two of these amendments have been approved without notice to the public. One of the applicants, Mainstream Canada, has already been violating licensed production limits on their Broughton Farms for years—almost doubling their licensed limit in the period 2004 to 2006. If the remaining permits are approved, current licensed production could triple on several farms in critical wild salmon migration routes—further pressuring already imperilled stocks.

The news follows a recent report in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management that sea lice infestations near fish farms are also present in the Discovery Islands region of B.C., potentially impacting economically valuable Georgia Strait herring and salmon stocks. DNA testing of sockeye salmon studied in the research is currently underway. We expect this research to confirm that affected salmon includes the highly valued Fraser River sockeye run.

The Georgia Strait Alliance is asking concerned citizens to sign a petition calling on the B.C. Government to deny the fish farm expansions. To sign the online petition, please visit: http://www.georgiastrait.org/urgent-action-message-form.php?urgent=farm_expand