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# **B.C. salmon farms evade government monitoring**

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**VANCOUVER** - The B.C salmon farm industry's decision to not co-operate with provincial reporting strategies has rendered government officials impotent and incapable of regulating the notoriously secretive industry, environmental groups Ecojustice and T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation said today.

As of April 1, 2010, salmon farms have refused to volunteer or make available tissue samples for government fish health and sea lice monitoring audits, proving the complete failure of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands' voluntary compliance strategy.

"The government's risky approach of voluntary self-reporting has backfired," said Randy Christensen, Ecojustice staff lawyer. "The government now has little-to-no oversight of the industry and as such, has essentially abdicated any responsibility for industry's impact on the environment."

To date, the ministry has done nothing to force information and samples from the fish farmers.

Wild salmon - notably sockeye stocks in the Fraser River, subject of the federal Cohen inquiry - are now at even greater risk because the government cannot effectively monitor, much less contain, lice and disease outbreaks, Christensen said.

This development comes as Ecojustice and T. Buck Suzuki are embroiled with the ministry in another struggle over the release of disease and sea lice infestation data. Despite losing a six-year battle to conceal figures from 2002-03, the ministry is once again trying to block the release of the same data for 2004-2010.

It also undermines previous assertions made by both government and industry that B.C salmon farms pose no threat to wild salmon stocks.

"There is no transparency and virtually no regulation of disease and sea lice on salmon farms. The government can't say it knows for a fact that the industry is safe when it does not have sufficient data to back up that claim," said David Lane, executive director of T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation.

"The B.C. government's continued protection of industry interests at the expense of the public's right to know is simply inexplicable."

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