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National Post

Opinion

Fish science

Mark Lewis and Martin Krkosek, **Financial Post** · Thursday, Jun. 24, 2010

Re: This science is fishy, Terence Corcoran, June 18

We wish to correct erroneous and misleading statements regarding our scientific work in this column. Our scientific articles on the effects of salmon farms on wild salmon in British Columbia are accurate and have stood up to rigorous challenges.

In 2007, we published a peer-reviewed paper in *Science*, which analyzed 36 years of Department of Fisheries and Oceans data on pink salmon spawning in 72 rivers of B.C. to isolate the effects of sea lice infestations in the Broughton Archipelago. The results indicated local populations would, on average, drop to 1% of historical levels within four years, if infestations continued. Indeed, a crisis was underway. However, the results also indicated that, if infestations were eliminated, wild salmon ought to recover.

In response to the infestations, farms in the affected area started co-ordinating the use of chemical pesticides. The preliminary data indicate there has been a corresponding reduction of lice on wild salmon and that wild salmon are in recovery. This is a success story of science informing practice, not "junk science."

Anyone who consults the published literature will find that our results are robust and stand up to the critiques that have been raised. The data have been double-checked and subjected to rigorous analysis and re-analysis. The infestations are not make-believe computer simulations, but are data from several years of fieldwork that analyzed over 50,000 wild juvenile salmon for sea lice.

It is undeniable that industrial salmon farms can threaten wild salmon. However, there are solutions, such as co-ordinated management and moving farms off migration routes or into closed containment technology. We hope that progress towards these solutions will not stall.

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