

PROVINCE APPROVES ANOTHER FISH FARM IN BESEIGED BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

Wild salmon, whales, tourism, First Nations rights and fishing jobs threatened.

For immediate release

April 5, 2006: Sointula, Alert Bay, Vancouver: The nine member groups of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform¹ (CAAR) today voiced dismay at the Campbell government's decision to approve a new open-net cage salmon farm in the besieged Broughton Archipelago. The approval exacerbates the risk to wild salmon and ocean ecosystems in an area already suffering from the concentration of open net cages.

“That the BC government would choose to approve a new fish farm in the Broughton at a time when so much effort, research and funding is being invested in solving the problems created by existing open net-cage fish farms is truly disheartening,” said Catherine Stewart of Living Oceans Society, a CAAR member group. “It appears the Liberal government's policy towards environmental progress on fish farming is one step forward, ten steps back.”

The new farm will be located at Bennett Point in Clio Channel. The site was identified in the federal Environmental Assessment screening process as a migration route for juvenile wild salmon, habitat for the blue-listed (at risk)² humpback whale and important to recreational anglers and lodge-based tourism. Bennett Point also was noted as important for local prawn and shrimp fishermen, whose livelihoods may be threatened by losing fishing grounds to the new fish farm operation and the use of chemicals on the farm that are designed to kill another crustacean – the sea louse.

While respecting the rights and decisions of their Tlowitsis neighbours in whose territory the new farm is located, the Musgamagw-Tswataineuk Tribal Council (MTTC) nonetheless insists that their migratory salmon stocks, already under siege by existing fish farms, will be further impacted by the approval of yet another farm that will contribute to the environmental and sea lice problems so evident in this region

“The granting of another license that will affect our territory is not at all consistent with the principles of the Liberal government's “New Relationship” document,” said Chief Bob Chamberlin, Chairperson of the MTTC. “The Province has promised the highest environmental standards and the best fisheries in the world as a foundation of their new relationship with First Nations This decision undermines even the most basic principles

¹ The member groups of CAAR are the David Suzuki Foundation, Friends of Clayoquot Sound, Georgia Strait Alliance, Living Oceans Society, Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council, Raincoast Conservation Society, Raincoast Research, T.Buck Suzuki Foundation and the Watershed Watch Salmon Society.

² The B.C. Provincial “blue list” identifies species of “special concern”. Blue-listed species are “particularly sensitive to human activities” and are deemed to be species at risk. The Pacific humpback whale is also listed federally under the Species at Risk Act as a threatened species.

of the “New Relationship” commitments. This ‘business as usual’ approach completely disregards an infringement on our title and rights.”

Grieg Seafoods, a Norwegian based operator with fish farms on the Northwest coast of Vancouver Island, cleared the final hurdle in the federal and provincial approvals process last week. The company has been raising hatchery fish destined for this farm site for months prior to license approval - an investment that reflects Grieg’s confidence that provincial and federal screening processes would deem another farm in this over-burdened region a low risk to wild salmon, despite copious scientific evidence to the contrary.

Lice outbreaks in the Broughton threaten the survival of juvenile wild pink and chum salmon according to abundant peer-reviewed science published in such journals as the prestigious Alaska Fishery Research Bulletin and the American Fisheries Society Journal.

CAAR maintains a new farm in the Broughton Archipelago poses a further threat to the health of this beleaguered ecosystem and strongly urges the government and industry to invest in a transition to closed containment farming technology. In addition, the issuance of this new license has the potential to destabilize the Legislative Committee on Aquaculture, undermine the work of John Fraser’s Pacific Salmon Forum and threaten the stability of the dialogue between CAAR members and the aquaculture company Marine Harvest.

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Backgrounder available on request.