

**For Immediate Release: February 26, 2007**

**B.C. salmon farms producing billions of sea lice eggs, new study shows**

**VANCOUVER**—Salmon farms are the major producers of sea lice threatening juvenile wild salmon in B.C.'s Broughton Archipelago, according to a peer-reviewed study just published in the *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*.

The study, by Dr. Craig Orr, Executive Director of Watershed Watch, and science coordinator of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), used industry data to track sea lice production on farmed salmon in open-net cages owned by Marine Harvest Canada over an 18-month period in 2003 and 2004.

The 12 active net-cage farms, which contained between 1 and 5 million Atlantic salmon, produced billions of lice eggs over the 18 months, with egg production peaking during winter-spring in both years, just prior to the seaward migration of the area's small and vulnerable juvenile wild salmon.

An estimated 1.6 billion lice eggs were produced over a 2-week period in the winter of 2004, but only half as many eggs were produced during this period in 2003, when 800,000 fewer salmon were present, as required by the provincial government's "2003 sea lice action plan."

The article confirms that, when lice egg production was reduced, infections on wild juvenile salmon near the farms declined dramatically—including a 42-fold decline near one emptied farm.

"The results aren't surprising," said Dr. Orr. "They simply confirm European research showing that farmed salmon substantially amplify the production of sea lice in coastal waters, especially in the winter and spring, when vulnerable juvenile wild salmon have not historically encountered many infectious lice."

"What's particularly revealing and disappointing is that our government agencies consistently ignore or dismiss these lessons, shifting the burden of proof from themselves onto conservationists and First Nations."

Marine Harvest has published its data on lice and farmed fish since September 2004, the only B.C. fish farming company to have done so. The latest study drew on these data. The 12 farms that are the focus of the study represent about 13% of the active open-cage salmon farms in B.C.'s coastal waters.

Marine Harvest is now collaborating with CAAR to monitor lice on farms and to improve our understanding of sea lice dynamics.

The study results support CAAR's call for changing from net-pen salmon farming to closed containment—the only known safe way to farm domestic salmon without harming wild stocks.

**To view the journal-posted abstract visit:**

<http://afs.allenpress.com/perlserv/?request=get-abstract&doi=10.1577%2FM06-043.1>

**To view the full article visit:**

[http://www.watershed-watch.org/publications/files/Orr\\_2007.pdf](http://www.watershed-watch.org/publications/files/Orr_2007.pdf)

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