

Fishing for answers

KATHERINE PALMER GORDON

As many as 11 million sockeye salmon were expected to return to the Fraser River and its tributaries this fall but actual returns may number in the thousands. Critics of DFO say federal fisheries couldn't manage a home aquarium. DFO says they're being treated unfairly.



PHOTO: ROBERT KOOPMANS

Sockeye salmon spawning in the Adams River.

DFO is an agency that couldn't manage a home aquarium," says former DFO communications officer Alex Rose. Now a journalist in Vancouver, Rose is not alone in his criticism of his former employer. There is a damning consensus among those involved with BC's wild salmon fishery that DFO mismanagement is exacerbating the rapid decline of wild salmon numbers in our waters.

"DFO has been doing an abysmal job of fisheries management," says commercial fisheries advocate Phil Eidsvik. Biologist Alexandra Morton, who has devoted the last 15 years to battling both DFO and the provin-

cial government about the negative impacts of fish farms on wild salmon, agrees: "DFO ignores the science, misinforms the public, offers unconfirmed theories and takes no action." Retired fisheries scientists Gordon Hartman and Casey McAllister add: "DFO's performance during the past 25 years is lamentable."

After seeing bear numbers drop drastically on the central coast this year, eco-tour guide Fred Seiler observed: "This should be a huge red flag for DFO, but they continue to manage BC's salmon fishery in a total state of denial." "They are in complete denial," concurs Sto:lo Nation's

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—former DFO communications officer Alex Rose

Doug Kelly, co-chair of the First Nations Fisheries Council. “This is a department,” concludes Eidsvik bluntly, “with no friends left in Canada.”

In August this year, DFO broke the shattering news that it was closing the Fraser River sockeye fishery for the third year running. Returns of the wild fish were drastically lower than originally estimated. At first DFO predicted returns of over ten million; then after sampling the runs at sea, lowered that to a mere 1.37 million. By September, it was devastatingly clear that the numbers of Fraser River sockeye reaching their spawning grounds could be counted in the mere thousands. When asked what had gone wrong, however, DFO simply shrugged its bureaucratic and political shoulders, saying it had insufficient scientific data to know.

Among the theories espoused in the immediate aftermath of the news were “poor ocean conditions” having a detrimental effect on the fish during the marine phase of their life cycle. But very little is known about salmon in the ocean phase of their life cycle. It’s also difficult to reconcile poor ocean conditions with the fact that pink salmon returns and other sockeye runs were much more abundant in 2009 than in recent years.

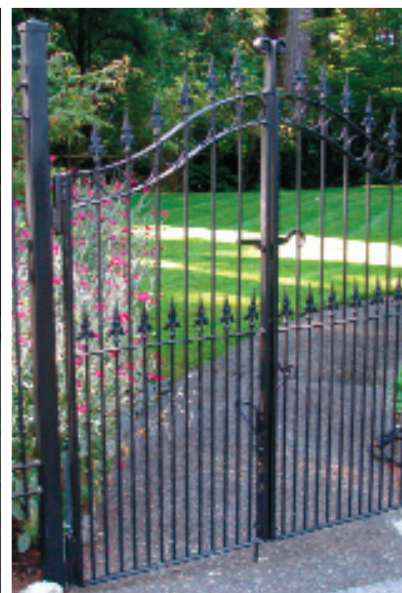
A more likely cause, say people like Alex Rose, is BC’s history of overfishing of salmon stocks to the point of terminal decline. In 1996 journalist Terry Glavin recorded a litany of vanished and drastically reduced BC fisheries in his book *Dead Reckoning: Confronting the Crisis in Pacific Fisheries*. The salmon fisheries, said Glavin, had already become remnants of their former glory thanks to rampant overfishing: they were even then “mere zoo populations compared to their preindustrial abundance.”

By 2005 American scientist Xanthippe Augerot had established that more than 60 BC salmon stocks have already become extinct. Thirty percent of remaining sockeye, 36 percent of chinook and 30 percent of coho and steelhead stocks face extinction. These are numbers, says Rose, which are directly correlated to decades of DFO prioritizing harvesting opportunities for the commercial fishery over conservation.

The third theory regarding the demise of the missing fish, one championed by biologist Alexandra Morton and like-minded scientists, is that the gauntlet of fish farms that Fraser River sockeye have to run is a significant factor. But—despite its admission that it doesn’t know what happened to the fish—DFO has been quick to exonerate fish farms. On August 15, DFO’s Pacific region director Paul Sprout went into print unequivocally stating: “Sea lice from fish farms are not the explanation.”

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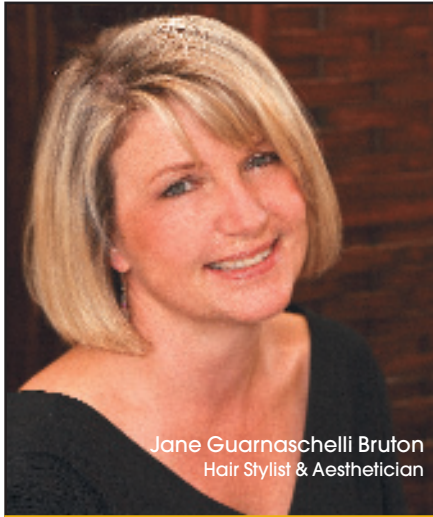


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DFO regional director Barry Rosenberger was less sure: “Fish farms may be having an impact to some degree,” he admitted—but he still insisted: “They can’t explain all the problems in the Fraser.”

If so, what can? The answer is easy, say many commentators: DFO’s management of the wild salmon fishery.

What’s wrong with DFO?

Money, politics and conflicts of interest: these are DFO’s main failings. The agency is woefully underfunded, both in terms of research capability and conservation policy implementation. Continued lobbying to Ottawa to provide more research dollars has fallen on deaf ears to date. Cuts to enforcement budgets over the last two decades have also seen DFO’s ability to prosecute environmental violations greatly reduced. John Werring, a fish biologist with the David Suzuki Foundation, says: “They’ve reduced enforcement capability so greatly that there are now just seven inspectors for the entire Pacific Region, to respond to everything from illegal fishing to habitat destruction. This is a situation doomed to fail.”

Secondly, although conservation principles have been added to the Fisheries Act in recent years, DFO’s primary function remains the management of harvesting of salmon, not protection. Accordingly, political pandering to commercial fishing interests—indeed, any business interest affecting salmon or their habitat—almost always overrides science.

In his 2007 book analyzing the collapse of the east coast cod fishery, *Who Killed the Grand Banks*, Alex Rose castigates DFO for its blatant support for overfishing of threatened stocks, citing page after page of damning evidence of DFO’s imperative to serve business rather than conservation. “Every new employee soon learned that, as an agency, we existed to support the commercial fishing industry. Period,” writes Rose.

Rose devotes two chapters in his book to the BC salmon fishery, writing despairingly that DFO is managing west coast salmon into extinction the same way the department oversaw the disappearance of east coast cod: “It breaks my heart to say it, but there are just too many striking similarities between Atlantic cod and Pacific salmon. I believe we’re at the tipping point.”

In those chapters, Rose documents a litany of poor management decisions in BC from the 1970s onwards, all aimed at support for industry, and all of which have had disastrous consequences for Pacific salmon. Some of those decisions were simply inept. DFO dumped

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—Retired fisheries scientists
Gordon Hartman and
Casey McAllister

fertilizer into the Babine Lake system, for example, to enhance population growth in the local sockeye stocks. The experiment was successful for sockeye, but has resulted in the decimation of several other threatened species in the bycatch of eager fishermen netting the now abundant Babine Lake sockeye run.

Rose describes other decisions of DFO as outright criminal. In 2006, BC Institute of Technology students discovered millions of juvenile salmon had died as a result of a DFO-supported gravel-mining operation on the lower Fraser River. Gravel extraction is big business on the Fraser, but highly risky to young fish which depend on gravel beds for survival. “[DFO officials] would have had to be blind in order to not know the risk of gravel removal was more than trivial,” BCIT fisheries biologist Marvin Rosenau told Rose.

Indeed, frontline DFO staff did know of the risks. But according to Rose, when they protested the approval of the gravel operation, they were overruled by senior executives in Ottawa. The same frontline staff told the BCIT researchers that DFO could and should be charged under the Criminal Code for failure to meet its statutory responsibilities. No prosecution ensued, however.

The same year, documents obtained by Watershed Watch Salmon Society under the *Freedom of Information Act* revealed that DFO managers on the Skeena River had bowed to political pressure from commercial fishing groups and turned a deliberate blind eye to illegal overfishing of endangered stocks on the river. According to Watershed Watch, DFO’s management plan required commercial openings to end on August 6, 2006. But after intensive political lobbying, fishing

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continued for another month. An internal memo from DFO biologist Steve Cox-Rogers confesses: "We said we would fish selectively to minimize harvest impacts [but] we caved under pressure."

These are just some of the known examples of DFO management decisions with negative impacts on salmon. Ultimately, says Rose, "While there are some good and honourable people within DFO, as a former employee I have to say the organization is intellectually bankrupt. Politics always takes priority over policy and the fish. This is all about greed, because fish equals money and no-one wants to admit that we're [annihilating] our wild salmon resource."

DFO does have a solid basis on which it could—and indeed, should—be taking mitigative action to protect wild salmon. Under the 1995 *United Nations Agreement on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks*, to which Canada is a signatory, DFO is required to apply the "precautionary approach" to its management of the wild fish. When scientific information is "uncertain, unreliable or inadequate" the precautionary approach prohibits DFO from using the absence of adequate scientific information "as a reason to postpone or fail to take action to avoid serious harm" to a fishery.

But despite this unequivocal international obligation, and its public admission that a lack of scientific knowledge is behind the uncertainty over the missing fish, DFO has yet to either constrain harvesting on a long term basis or impose significant controls on industrial operations that affect the fish, such as run-of-river power or fish farms. Instead, it just keeps repeating that it needs more information. Indeed, by time of publication, DFO was denying there was even a problem. On October 14, DFO's Barry Rosenberger told the *New Westminster Record* there had been no salmon collapse in the Fraser: "The management objective for the year was to put the majority of those fish into the system to spawn, and we've met that objective," he insisted.

The same day, Stephen Hume reported in the *Vancouver Sun* that by the end of September fewer than 8,500 fish had been counted in the spawning grounds for the Quesnel Lake system, the Shuswap, the Nechako and the Horsefly River combined. The forecast numbers for the Nechako alone had been 374,000. It is difficult to understand how these actual returns meet management objectives of any kind; unless those objectives are, as Rose surmises, to oversee the complete demise of the fishery.

Conflict and priorities: DFO and fish farms

DFO's critics say the department also has two functions that are directly at odds with each other: management of wild salmon and promotion of aquaculture.

Atlantic salmon farms on BC's coast were a long-standing thorn in the side of wild fish advocates well before a court decision in February transferred responsibility for the farms from the province to DFO. The list of concerns is well-known. They include high levels of sea lice in and around open net pens killing migrating juvenile wild salmon, degradation of the sea bed with accumulated faeces, and escapement of the exotic species into wild salmon spawning streams. Unfortunately, at this point, DFO seems even less likely than the province to address these concerns.

Retired Nanaimo fisheries scientists Gordon Hartman and Casey McAllister have 85 years of combined experience in biology and oceanography between them, most of it at DFO. In August, the two men wrote to federal Fisheries Minister Gail Shea skewering their former employer for "playing handmaiden to the aquaculture industry." While numerous independent and credible scientific studies clearly show that a risk of

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serious or irreversible harm exists from the open-net salmon farming industry, they stated, DFO's own research is weak at best and is prone to political and corporate influence.

In direct contravention of its obligation to apply the precautionary approach to wild salmon management, DFO is using the excuse of a lack of solid information to avoid taking any action against salmon farms. If anything, it is doing the opposite: "The department behaves more like an aquaculture promotion organization than a responsibly involved fisheries research and management agency," Hartman and McAllister accused Shea.

Certainly, if Minister Shea's behaviour is any indication, they are correct. Shea refused to meet promptly with groups from the fisheries sector or environmental organizations to discuss the missing salmon crisis. Instead, she travelled to Norway to market BC's salmon farms in accordance with the federal government's announcement in 2008 of a \$70 million plan to double aquaculture production in Canada over the next decade. Although she convened a meeting in Ottawa two months later to discuss the issue, it was by invitation only. Chief Bob Chamberlin, chairman of the First Nations Leadership Council's aquaculture working group, was barred from entry. Others who attended, like Doug Kelly of the Sto:lo Nation, found it a waste of time: "The meeting achieved very little," he stated afterwards.

At a bureaucratic level, as we already know, DFO officials have ruled out fish farms as a potential threat to wild salmon. The agency's website also contains a lengthy dismissal of sea lice as a problem, discounting studies that indicate the opposite is true. It's a position that aggravates wild salmon advocates almost beyond endurance. "Fish farms may well not be the only cause of wild salmon mortality," says Watershed Watch Executive Director Craig Orr. "I don't think anyone disagrees salmon are also vulnerable to habitat loss, environmental degradation and global warming. But that doesn't mean DFO shouldn't be investigating to what extent they are to blame. For DFO to say that fish farms aren't responsible is simply ludicrous," exclaims Orr in frustration.

To be fair, DFO's responsibility for the promotion of salmon aquaculture puts it in an irreconcilable conflict of interest in trying to protect wild salmon. "It's causing no end of trouble for DFO," agrees Orr. "It's very hard to protect wild fish when you're not allowed to close down fish farms."

As an example of the conflict in practice, consider the issue of underwater lighting on fish farms. According to the BC Salmon Farmers' Association, lights are commonly used at night on fish farms to regulate the salmon's growth rate and prevent early maturing of the fish. But the lights also attract young wild salmon into the pens, exposing them to disease, sea lice and predation from the farmed fish. Under clause 8 of the *Pacific Fishery Regulations*, using lights in any manner to attract fish is prohibited. But requiring the lights to be turned off would interfere with the business operations of fish farms. Unsurprisingly, therefore, no charges have yet been laid by DFO against a fish farm for the use of underwater lights.

The battle against fish farms has instead been left to people like Alexandra Morton. When Minister Shea publicly exonerated fish farms on the basis that there had been a "coastwide decline" across all salmon

MORTON EXAMINED both pinks and sockeye over the course of 2007 and 2008. The juvenile pinks were relatively lice-free; the sockeye heavily infested. Based on her findings, this March Morton accurately predicted the collapse of the Fraser sockeye.

species, Morton quickly corrected the statement, noting that the collapse had in fact centred only on stocks running the gauntlet of coastal fish farms. She also contradicted statements by DFO officials that the sea lice being found on the Fraser sockeye are not the same as those prevalent on fish farms. "I found that over 90 percent of the fish I looked at had the same species on them," says Morton. "It boggles my mind why DFO would deny it, but I think they would throw themselves in front of a speeding train to defend the aquaculture industry." Like Rose, Morton is unafraid to characterize the failure to protect wild salmon for future generations as "a crime against humanity."

Morton is adamant that fish farms have to take responsibility for the missing sockeye. "People say, it can't all be fish farms to blame. But I think it is, because if you can't get past the fish farms

safely, then nothing else matters." Apart from sea lice, Morton says disease is also an enormous issue. "Epidemics don't occur in the wild, because the fish have evolved in a way that breaks the cycle of disease naturally and predators deal with sick or weak salmon." But, says Morton, fish farms are breaking the laws of nature. Predators can't get at penned-up animals with diseases, and the use of drugs also carries dangers. Again, says Morton, DFO has done very little to examine the impacts on wild fish of disease in fish farms, or of the drugs used to combat them.

According to Dr Sergio Paone in a report for the Suzuki Foundation on the use of drugs on fish farms, antibiotics, pesticides and fungicides are all in active use. Many of them have extremely negative effects on the surrounding marine environment. Antibiotics like oxytetracycline are poorly absorbed by salmon. When they are excreted by the fish, they persist in the environment, leading to an increase in antibiotic-resistant bacteria. "The fish also quickly get resistant to the drugs," adds Morton, "so you have to use more and more."

Morton also says: "These are known neurotoxins being emptied into the ocean, with no public warnings being issued. We don't know yet the full impact of these drugs, but we know some of them impact shell-formation on crustaceans, for example." Paone points out that pesticides used in the treatment of sea lice such as ivermectin, azanethipos and cypermethrin, have the ability to disrupt neurological processes and can be highly toxic to a wide variety of marine species, including shrimp, lobster and a class of marine worms that are "a crucial part of many marine food chains."

Another pesticide called SLICE has been touted as being very effective in sea lice management, and is in active use on BC's fish farms. But according to the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), SLICE contains emamectin benzoate, a chemical banned by the US Food and Drug Administration for use on fish. CARR points out that the warning label for Proclaim, an agricultural pesticide containing emamectin benzoate, states clearly: "This pesticide is toxic to fish, birds, mammals, and aquatic invertebrates. Do not apply directly to water, to areas where surface water is present, or to intertidal areas below the mean high water mark."

Morton says all of the concerns Paone has identified with other pesticides need to be considered in relation to the use of SLICE. Even DFO admits on its website that SLICE is an unknown entity, stating clearly that a review of the drug by Environment Canada notes: "a limited

knowledge base for assessment of the environmental effects, particularly for sub-lethal effects and for species of interest in British Columbia. Clearly, more research is required to address ecological toxicity issues in the BC environment.”

Despite that, says Morton, DFO is failing to apply a precautionary approach to the use of such drugs. Rather, the agency is encouraging it.

Opponents of Morton cling to evidence that in the last five years, better fish farm practices in the Broughton Archipelago, including intensive use of pesticides like SLICE during migration periods, have resulted in reductions of sea lice on wild fish in that area from more than 70 percent in 2004 to a three to eight percent incidence rate. The latter figure was established by scientists working for the BC Pacific Salmon Forum (PSF), a now-defunct provincially-funded research group, as being the likely proportion of wild salmon on which sea lice would naturally occur prior to the establishment of fish farms in the 1980s. According to the PSF, that is the acceptable “baseline” or natural sea lice incidence rate that can now again be expected on wild fish in the Broughton area.

But salmon conservation biologist John Werring and his colleague at the David Suzuki Foundation, biologist Jeffery Young, are both dismissive of that baseline as applied to Fraser River salmon. “The red flag goes up whenever I hear the expression ‘baseline data’ used,” says Young. “When it comes to these fish, the world has changed considerably since the 1980s. Even if it is true that levels are the same as they were before, the situation is different now. Juvenile salmon are much more vulnerable in 2009 thanks to environmental degradation and climate change.”

Werring adds: “It’s an incredibly myopic view to suggest data from the Broughton applies anywhere else. That’s only one area of the ocean, and we know nothing about what is happening in other areas.” Werring says it’s also a very selective way at looking at the available research, pointing to the Johnstone Strait migratory route between Campbell River and Alert Bay as an example. “There are 36 farms along that very narrow passage. Preliminary research by Alex Morton and the Raincoast Conservation Foundation has found that all the juveniles—sockeye, pink and chum—going through the passage are infested with sea lice.” Meanwhile, says Werring, DFO senior officials continue to state that there is no evidence fish farms are impacting juvenile salmon. “They haven’t got a scientific leg to stand on,” he says.

Morton also says that the way in which SLICE is being applied is problematic for sockeye. For the last two years, SLICE has been actively applied by fish farms in the Broughton in February and March, in anticipation of spring migration activity. “But the life of the drug is short, only six to eight weeks. It’s acting during April and May, when pinks are migrating, but it doesn’t work long enough to protect the young sockeye, which go past in June and July.”

Morton examined both pinks and sockeye over the course of 2007 and 2008. The juvenile pinks were relatively lice-free; the sockeye heavily infested. Based on her findings, this March Morton accurately predicted the collapse of the Fraser sockeye.

She also notes another damning fact. Harrison Lake sockeye, which are known to migrate south rather than north, like the Fraser River species, returned this year at twice the numbers expected by DFO. There are no fish farms on the southern migration route.

Given such compelling facts, and the evidence of the negative impacts of disease and drug use, Morton, Werring and many of their colleagues say that closing the farmed fishery along the Fraser River migration route is a logical *precautionary* action to take, but DFO refuses to do so.

More knowledge is required to find a definitive answer to why the fish went missing, says DFO’s Barry Rosenberger, but that doesn’t mean

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taking the precaution of limiting fish farm activity in the meantime. "The precautionary approach requires a balancing act. If there is an impact from fish farms, we have to address it. But we have to see if there is a negative impact first."

Jeffery Young is extremely frustrated by that response: "It shouldn't be up to organizations like ours to prove fish farm practices aren't safe," says Young. "The onus should be on them to prove they are. As long as DFO keeps on saying it's OK to be doing business as usual while research is ongoing, there's no incentive to find the solution."

In its own defence

When asked whether DFO could do better, DFO regional director Barry Rosenberger at first avoids answering. Instead, he goes on the attack: "The loudest voices of criticism aren't necessarily trying to find solutions. They'd rather be in the media than help out." He is frustrated that journalists consistently and wrongly characterize the missing fish as being in the realm of ten million when the truth was closer to 4.5 million. He explains that the estimates are anything but an exact science, and the range of estimated return was anything from 6 to 10 million. So with close to 1.5 million returned, that leaves closer to 4.5 million fish missing than 10 or 11 million cited by some.

Rosenberger complains that the media have played up the drama of hungry bears on the north and central coast, linking that to low fish returns, when his team have counted more bears on the Fraser River this year than they've seen in years. He also complains that DFO unfairly takes much of the criticism, when it is the province that is responsible for freshwater habitat and environmental management.

Fair enough. But in the meantime, when the question on improving DFO's own management is repeated, Rosenberger insists: "In 2009, we responded well to the situation. We have a good in-river management system with good checks and balances, a pretty good set of tools to use, and we used them." In other words, DFO temporarily closed the Fraser River sockeye fishery to everything but a very limited First Nations catch.

Rosenberger says that the key issue as a manager of salmon is to recognize a problem early and act immediately on it, which DFO did by closing the fishery last August. But such closures are a band-aid rather than a cure. In the meantime, DFO is doing nothing of significance to prevent the low returns in the first place.

“WE ASK THAT YOUR department begin to honour, fully, its responsibility for wild salmon protection in a manner that is above politics and short-term gain.”

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Gordon Hartman and
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The provincial government

The provincial government is doing little to help. Admittedly, it does not have jurisdiction over saltwater fisheries. Nonetheless there is a general consensus that the province does have a pivotal role to play in habitat protection. It could and should be doing more to protect freshwater habitat, for example, from industrial development such as run-of-river power projects, and it should be placing much stricter controls on the use of fresh water generally.

In October 2004, provincial Auditor-General Wayne Strelieff expressed strong criticism of the provincial government for its lack of a "clear vision and an overarching strategy for wild salmon sustainability." The province agreed that it was a priority to work with the federal government on the issue and commissioned research from the BC Pacific Salmon Forum, a collection of knowledgeable individuals from different fisheries sectors. The Forum released its report in January 2009. One compelling statement stands out: "The current governance of both wild and farmed salmon is simply not adequate to address threats against them and requires transformative change immediately to ensure that wild salmon have a vibrant future in BC."

Soon afterwards, the province lost control of fish farm management but did nothing to appeal the court decision. Provincial communications officials advise that the government intends to keep lobbying its federal counterparts to support the Forum's recommendations, which included a shift to more holistic ecosystem-based management of all fisheries and finding definitive answers to the fish farm controversy. Environment Minister Barry Penner also wrote to Gail Shea in August, advocating for a review of the Fraser River fishery.

But Jon O'Riordan, a former provincial deputy minister who was the director of research

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for the Forum, is less than optimistic DFO will rise to the challenge. “BC had the capacity and interest to deal with the Forum’s recommendations, but I’m not clear whether DFO will assume the same level of commitment. If they don’t, they’re going to be much less capable of managing fish farms than the province.”

That’s a scary thought. It’s one echoed by John Werring: “I’m not optimistic that DFO will do anything, especially given their public statements that they don’t think fish farms are a problem.”

So long and thanks for all the fish

Former DFO scientists Hartman and McAllister concluded their August 31 letter to Gail Shea by telling her: “Your government should protect wild salmon as well as possible for as long as possible. This can be done. However, it requires a more sincere concern for wild fish than is evident to date on the part of DFO.”

The action necessary, says Alexandra Morton, is straightforward: apply the precautionary principle, close the farmed fishery on the Fraser River migratory route, enforce the Fisheries Act against fish farms in violation of its provisions, depoliticize DFO scientists, and invest in open, credible and transparent scientific research to support protection of the wild fish. “If you won’t take these steps,” she wrote forcefully in September, “please resign along with your Pacific Region senior staff and make way for people who will honour DFO’s contract with the public of Canada, present and future generations, to protect our salmon.”

“We ask,” Hartman and McAllister also begged Shea, “that your department begin to honour, fully, its responsibility for wild salmon protection in a manner that is above politics and short-term gain.”

For the sake of the fish, we can all only hope that before it is too late, DFO will finally listen.

Katherine Palmer Gordon is an author and freelance writer based on Gabriola Island. Her most recent book is *The Garden that You Are* (Sono Nis).



Alain St. Onge and Ian Cromack

Alain St. Onge is vibrating. And it’s not just the jazzy stripes of his lovely “new” shirt (“I got it at Value Village!” he exclaims happily as he holds up an elbow). His energy and aliveness come from living his passion to help create a more ecologically responsible culture. He and his partner Ian Cromack own a large “eco-emporium” on Fort Street between Douglas and Blanshard: The Good Planet Company.

“Ian and I are not big consumers overall; it’s funny that we have a retail store,” Alain muses. “But we feel we carry good options for people. This is ‘conscious consumerism’...being aware of the impact of the purchases we make on a daily basis, since that’s one of the few things we can control.”

“The store is a way for us to live our values and build community with others who share this inspiration to live greener lives,” he continues. “We want to be a clearing-house of information; if we don’t have something, we point people in the right direction to find what they need. It’s non-intimidating, non-preachy—we want everyone to feel welcome in the store. Our customers are each on their ‘green’ path in their own way.”

Victoria is one of the greenest cities in the country, but people who live with ecological sustainability as a motivation for their purchasing are still a minority in the culture overall. Green has gone mainstream, but will we maintain and build upon our commitment?

Alain thinks yes. “If people can come into our store and get what we’re about, purchase something that

helps them stay on a path, that can be the beginning of a real shift for them. For others who already ‘get it,’ it’s like coming home.”

And what a homecoming. From outrageously sumptuous, comfortable and healthy 100 percent natural wool, organic cotton and latex mattresses (which, unlike conventional mattresses, last 20 years and then biodegrade) to luxurious organic cotton sheets (or silky bamboo ones) to delicious fair-trade coffee and teas, this place has it all. And if you’re a storage container junkie, this is stainless steel heaven.

Soaps, shampoos and lotions that are free of parabens and sulphates are extremely popular, and The Good Planet Company has their own line of products with, of course, a no-waste refill program. There are also entire sections devoted to everything needed to care for baby or pet while in turn caring for the Earth.

Knowing that each product you purchase at The Good Planet Company has been produced locally, traded fairly or both, you can choose to bring more and more ecological sustainability into your daily life by being a “conscious consumer.” And the best part is that you will be in very good company when you shop at the Good Planet!

The Good Planet Company
Victoria’s Eco Lifestyle Store
764 Fort Street
www.goodplanet.com • 250-590-3501