

Wilderness Tourism Association



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For Immediate Release

WTA calls for DFO action in order to save wild salmon

(January 26, 2010 Cumberland, BC) The BC Wilderness Tourism Association (WTA) is calling on DFO to implement key interim measures for aquaculture management in order to help save BC's wild salmon. The jurisdiction over the management of open net cage salmon farms in BC will transfer from the province to the federal government come February 10, 2010, as per the Supreme Court of BC decision. However, DFO has now asked the Supreme Court of BC for an extension of an additional eleven months in order to develop meaningful regulations and organize the aquaculture branch. In either scenario most of the current BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) regulations will be adopted until such a time that the new federal regulations are complete. "This situation is very worrisome to the WTA as the current BC regulations are woefully inadequate to protect wild salmon," said Brian Gunn, President of the Wilderness Tourism Association. "We need federal measures in place now to protect wild salmon during their upcoming spring migration".

"For eight years now the WTA, and other concerned stakeholders, have been asking for open net cage salmon farms to be properly regulated to remove the impacts imposed on juvenile wild salmon caused by sea lice incubated on salmon farms", said Gunn. "For example, there is no requirement in the current provincial regulations for the salmon farmers to sample the wild juvenile fry around the farms during the infectious sea lice stage. And we know from independent sampling that tens to hundreds of millions of salmon fry have been injured or killed from sea lice incubated on open net cage salmon farms, creating a 'barrier' to the wild salmon on their out migration routes. Until this problem is resolved all the good efforts to repair and improve salmon spawning habitat are being undermined."

In a letter sent to Minister Gail Shea today, the WTA has asked DFO to implement key interim measures now so they can be in effect for spring 2010. These measures include implementing natural background lice level thresholds for wild salmon populations, independent research and monitoring for lice levels on wild salmon and establishing a wild salmon migratory corridor, free of salmon farms. Most of these measures are consistent with the BC Salmon Forum findings and recommendations released last spring. See attached letter for full recommendations.

Wilderness Tourism pours \$1.5 billion dollars into the BC economy annually. However, the BC tourism industry relies on healthy wild salmon populations to sustain their businesses, whether they are fishing lodges, fine dining establishments or wildlife viewing operations.

Action is critical now as time is running out for important runs of BC's wild salmon!

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For more information and/or a copy of the WTA letter to Minister Shea, please contact:

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