

For Immediate Release

The BC Wilderness Tourism Association calls for a new Fisheries Minister.

(May 9, 2010; Victoria, BC) From the steps of the BC legislature yesterday, at the Get out Migration rally attended by approximately four thousand people, Brian Gunn, President of the BC Wilderness Tourism Association called for Prime Minister Stephen Harper to replace Gail Shea with a Minister that will be independent and work to protect wild salmon. “We are outraged by Minister Shea’s comments in the House of Commons on Friday where she blasted ‘Get Out Migration’ marchers for threatening fish farming jobs,” said Gunn. “What about the thousands of jobs the salmon farming industry is impacting.”

“Nature based tourism industry represents 26,000 direct jobs and 40,000 jobs in total. In addition our nature based tourism is the main driver of all tourism in BC, which in total represents 132,000 direct jobs,” said Gunn. “Wild salmon supports our world famous sport fishery and is a mainstay on menus in our restaurants and cafés. We also depend on wild salmon for feeding all the wildlife that people come to see, such as the bears, whales, seals, and eagles, and nurturing the majestic forests of BC. We are here participating in this (Get Out Migration) rally because our tourism jobs are directly threatened by the salmon farms, which incubate billions of sea lice that destroy our wild salmon fry.”

“Our tourism operators have seen with our own eyes the devastation done to the wild salmon by the sea lice incubated on salmon farms,” said Gunn. “We cannot be misled by the rhetoric and phony science of the salmon farm industry and government. We have asked repeatedly for Minister Shea to meet with us and see the devastation for herself, but she has been unwilling to do so. We need a new Minister that will come immediately to the Broughton Archipelago (BA) to see for himself or herself the devastation of wild salmon.”

“We know that there is a solution that will protect both salmon farming jobs and tourism jobs and that is for the salmon farm industry to move from open net caged pens located on wild salmon migratory routes and into closed containment,” said Gunn. “We know that closed containment is both technically and economically feasible. We also know that the salmon farm industry is reluctant to make this move because it threatens the huge profitability of the existing farm operations. However, with the existing operations they are getting a free ride on their costs by dumping their wastes and releasing diseases and parasites into the environment.”

“Until we have a minister who can think and act independently we don’t see any positive solutions forthcoming for our wild salmon,” said Gunn. “Action is critical now as time is running out for important runs of BC’s wild salmon. We need a Minister that can stand up for wild salmon now!”

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