

Brian Gunn's Notes of His Norway Trip June 11-13<sup>th</sup> 2007.

I went last week to Norway with a group of people representing the Pure Salmon Campaign including representative from Chile. I met with farmers, fishermen, hunters, ENGO's, MPs, labour organizations, people from the Department of Environment and the Department of Fisheries, the CEO of Cermaq and Marine Harvest Shareholders for the purpose of increasing our knowledge of the farmers and to ask them to stop killing our wild salmon. This report and trip follows on the visit of Tom Rivest of Great Bear Nature Tours three weeks previously to meet with the Cermaq shareholders.

I came away from Norway feeling more strongly than ever that the most serious problem facing our industry is the collapse of the wild populations of salmon in BC and consequently the death of our coastal nature based industry as we know it, if the open net caged salmon farms continue in their present state and continue to expand. The following is what I said, learned and had reinforced in my mind about the problems facing our industry and how to solve them.

1. Salmon farms in British Columbia incubate sea lice. These sea lice are killing wild pink and chum salmon fry in huge numbers, which results in fewer fish reaching maturity and also results in less feed available to Chinook and Coho salmon - our prize sports fish and feedstock for the whales. This in turn affects our tourism industry, because the coastal, nature based tourism industry relies on wild salmon for its economy. Without the wild salmon, there will be no coastal nature based tourism industry.
2. Companies have admitted in Norway that they are the primary cause of sea lice infestation on the wild stock (Atlantic salmon and sea trout) in Norway.
3. Norway has set aside farm free rivers and fjords. Several salmon rivers are fully protected because they don't empty into a fjord but directly into the ocean so there is no opportunity for farms to be placed in a way that interferes with the wild salmon. Out of 51 fjords, 29 are "protected", which is supposed to mean farm free. In fact, only two fjords are fully protected - the Tronheim and the Tana. As for the 29 "protected" fjords - it's not that they will eventually become farm free (work in progress). Rather, they have been protected part way down the fjord, but there are still farms in the protected areas and those farms have a couple of years to in which move. In the end, the fjords will still only receive partial protection. The fisherman and hunters were emphatic that they wanted fjords with NO farms and only won half the battle - they did receive partial protection, which is still being implemented. The hunters and fishers of Norway were interested in collaborating with comparable groups in BC to assist each other in resolving problems between farms and wild salmon and sea trout.
4. In Norway, about 10 million wild Atlantic salmon go out to sea and about half a million return. I am trying to find out what the Norwegian Atlantic fishery was at its peak, I suspect it was close to what ours is today.

5. Salmon production world wide in 2006 was 1,270,000 (1,270k) tonnes. The expected tonnage for 2007 (Marine Harvest estimate) is as follows: Norway 655-684k, Chile 371-407k, UK 128-133k, North America 128-129k and the Faroe Islands 14k-15k; for totals between 1296k and 1368k. The three Norwegian companies control 60% of the world market and their 60% share is divided as follows: Marine Harvest 56% , Cermaq 34% and Greig 10%.
6. Each harvested fish weighs about three kg's.
7. The BC wild salmon varies between 30 million and 70 million between 1953 and 2002. I use an average of 50 million for the following ratios. The ratio of wild to farmed salmon in BC is about 1.7 wild to 1 farm, whereas in Norway the ratio is about 400 farmed to 1 wild.
8. There is NO legal commercial fishery for wild Atlantic salmon anywhere in Europe.
9. Fish farm companies do not agree that the sea lice problem in BC is the same as it is in Norway, and they wish to do more research and believe that Slice is or can solve a problem that they say does not exist.
10. It was rumoured that Salmon farms in Chile have experienced 30% losses of their product in the last year due to sea lice infection on their farms attributed to using a generic and cheap Chinese copy of Slice.
11. Fish Farm companies are unwilling to fallow farms or move them unless they can find alternative sites that will not have the same severe impact on the wild stock.
12. Fish farm companies are unwilling to go to closed containment as they say it is not economically feasible, after the experiment in Cedar to rear salmon on land proved to be too costly. If closed containment is successful, it will open the many new competitors. In my opinion, it is power, market share and control that Norwegian farmers are afraid of losing. What we need to do, is to convince the salmon farmers that they will lose more if they do not go to closed containment. They will lose out to the closed containment companies that already have projects under way. We need to convince salmon farm employees that their jobs will be more secure, not less secure, if we can proceed to closed containment. If they do not take the measures to remove the sea lice threats to wild salmon they will experience increased pressure from our operators to remove their businesses from our coastline. If they do take action to resolve the sea lice problem to our satisfaction, they will see support from our industry, which in turn will increase theirs and our business certainty and will enhance the economic and social opportunities much needed by our coastal communities.
13. Fish farm companies were told to stop the denial and get on with solutions. They need to spend money on research and work towards finding a solution, instead of focussing on ways to support their denial.

14. Fish farmers depend on Slice, which does work to kill lice. However, it is costly, and has not been applied in a timely enough manner in BC to prevent the lice from killing 80-90% of the fry swimming past the farms on their out migration routes of the Broughton Archipelago. Slice remnants are also deposited on the sea floor under the pens and have a detrimental effect on bottom feeding creatures.
15. In Norway, an antibiotic injection is being developed for farm smolts so that lice will not stay on the host; however, that is 5- 10 years away from commercial use.
16. The Cermaq CEO focussed on what he called "the misrepresentation of facts about farms from Enviro" is the best way I can put it. I emphasised that I was not here as an environmentalist but as a representative of businesses that had the most to lose from the continued actions of the farms and the loss of wild salmon (in the sense that farms were responsible for killing our wild salmon through sea lice infestations, and that the wild salmon are the mainstay of many tourism businesses.) We agreed to meet when he travels to BC in August.

As stated in Tom Rivest's report: "The only solution is physical separation of migrating fry and fish farms and it needs to be implemented next year, not in 5 years. While this is no small task it is more achievable to address it than to initiate a full frontal assault on the industry over labour, eutrophication of waters, escapes, and the wisdom of farming a predator animal, etc. We can't realistically expect the industry to reinvent itself overnight. But the sea lice problem has an urgency that the other issues lack, at least on this coast."