

Wilderness Tourism Association



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British Columbia Wilderness Tourism Association applauds actions of the Broughton Archipelago First Nation (Kwicksutaineuk/Ah-Kwa-Mish - KAFN) for going to Court over impacts of open-net farm farms on wild salmon and shellfish

(February 4, 2009 Campbell River, BC) News that the KAFN had filed a Class Action Law Suit related to the relationship between open-net salmon farming and declining wild salmon populations was greeted positively by Brian Gunn, President of the BC Wilderness Tourism Association (WTA). Gunn observed, "In BC both senior levels of government refuse to accept that salmon farms, as they currently operate, are causing irreparable damage to our wild salmon stocks." He went on to say, "It's a sad day when wild salmon require protection by the Courts from government lack of action, rather than benefiting from common sense being used by the government to protect them."

Members of the KAFN First Nation in the Broughton and the WTA have been trying to get the attention of all levels of government on this issue for a number of years.

The decline in wild salmon is starting to wreak havoc on nature-based tourism. Decreases in Pink salmon will have repercussions up and down the food chain whether on land or at sea. Recent scientific reports confirm that salmon farms are producing sea lice concentrations that are devastating to migrating juvenile salmon and that Pink salmon runs in the Broughton could be exterminated in six years if action to save wild stocks is not taken immediately.

WTA member operators have observed grizzly bears feeding on berries and grass are unable to find enough salmon to eat, an important source of protein which they need as they try to prepare for hibernation. Last year, Donna and Bill Mackay, the extremely knowledgeable owners of Mackay Whale Watching (Port McNeill), observed that Orcas are not socializing as much between pods due to their preoccupation with searching for food.

"Wilderness Tourism pours \$1.6 billion dollars into the BC economy annually," said Brian Gunn of the WTA. He observed, "We believe the BC Government is being irresponsible, risking BC's wild salmon populations and BC's lucrative \$10.4 billion dollar tourism industry. The BC tourism industry relies on healthy wild salmon populations to sustain their businesses, whether they are fishing lodges or wildlife viewing operations."

In closing, Gunn quoted Alexandra Morton who has been heavily involved in both the scientific and public debate on this issue. He recounted how last year while Morton was leading a fact-finding tour for concerned individuals and tourist operators in the Broughton, she stated "For the salmon the time for talk is over, it is time to bring action to this situation." Gunn concluded, "The KAFN are taking action, and the WTA supports and applauds them."

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"Ensuring a sustainable future for BC's wilderness tourism industry through leadership, advocacy, and education."