

Wilderness Tourism Association



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For Immediate Release: September 14, 2011

BC Wilderness Tourism Association cautiously optimistic about the Cohen Commission Hearings

(September, 2011; Cumberland, BC) The BC Wilderness Tourism Association (WTA) is cautiously optimistic with the Cohen Commission hearings on aquaculture and diseases. “Despite the obvious collusion between government and the salmon farming industry¹, and their ganging up on any testimony and evidence that might suggest impact from salmon farms, I am hopeful that some good will result from the inquiry”, said Brian Gunn, President of the BC Wilderness Tourism Association.

“The main positive outcome of the Cohen Commission process was that the ‘secret’ documents about disease records were made public, said Gunn. “These records, along with what our operators have personally seen, continue to lead me to believe that farmed salmon in open net pens located on wild salmon migratory corridors are highly impacting wild salmon. They do this because they serve as incubation or amplifying chambers for viruses and parasites initiating from both wild and farm fish.”

“It is my understanding that Judge Cohen will make his recommendations next summer to the Prime Minister”, said Gunn. “I would hope Cohen’s recommendations with regard to Aquaculture will include:

- A requirement that all records kept by government and the salmon farms with regard to ascertaining fish health both in the farm stock and in the wild stock that pass by or thru the farms be transparent and publicly available in a timely manner;
- That the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) should be split up, and there be a fisheries group that is responsible for protecting wild stocks using the best available science, and another group that would be responsible for regulating and controlling the salmon farms and ensure that they meet the standards recommended by the first group. Still another government agency should be responsible to promoting and marketing the Canadian salmon farming industry if Canadians feel that this is a prudent use of tax dollars;
- That the virus work undertaken by DFO’s Dr. Miller and others be properly funded so they can reach an independent and well informed conclusion about the impact of viruses amplified by salmon farms located in migratory corridors of the wild sockeye salmon.”

“Finally I would like to see a recommendation that would remove open net pen salmon farms from wild salmon migration corridors. But I will not hold my breath for this recommendation to come to fruition.”

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For more information on this issue and the WTA please contact Brian Gunn, WTA President at 250-286-4080 or mbg@uniserve.com

¹ Councils acting on behalf of the salmon farm industry (and representing those in favour of current salmon farming practices - i.e. open net pen salmon farms - and believe that these practices have no impact on wild salmon) included the Federal government, the Provincial government, the Farm’s council, and the Aboriginal Aquaculture Council. Councils acting on behalf of the ‘conservation sector’ (those that strongly believe that current management practices do impact wild salmon) included councils representing the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) and Alexandra Morton,