

Conservation Groups Support Immediate Action To Protect Wild Salmon And Promote Closed Containment

For Immediate Release

June 26, 2008 -- Vancouver, Sointula, BC: Conservation groups responded today with cautious support for a proposal aimed at providing emergency, interim protection for some wild salmon stocks in the Broughton Archipelago. The groups noted that this action underscores the seriousness of the sea lice situation and supports the need for long term solutions like closed containment systems.

Marine Harvest Canada has agreed to coordinate the stocking of their farms in this one region in order to establish safer migratory routes for the wild salmon as they make their way from the rivers to the open ocean. As part of this interim measure, Marine Harvest Canada is joining conservation groups in calling on the provincial government to invest a minimum of 10 million dollars in the development of commercial-scale closed containment projects. Both parties will also encourage a significant investment in closed containment research from the federal government.

"This migration corridor plan is expected to provide interim protection for some of our threatened wild salmon, but it is not a permanent, nor widespread solution," said Jennifer Lash of Living Oceans Society. "Ultimately, open net-cage salmon farms must transition to closed containment to ensure the long term health of our oceans."

Conservation groups believe the weight of scientific evidence that sea lice from salmon farms are killing BC's juvenile wild salmon is overwhelming. Action on this problem is long overdue and the groups applaud Marine Harvest for taking a step that should allow more time to address this critical issue.

"We believe this migration corridor proposal will help wild salmon, but we want to see clear evidence of success," said David Lane of the T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation. "Marine Harvest has agreed to an independent monitoring and evaluation program to measure sea lice levels on salmon farms and wild juvenile salmon in the Broughton to assess the effectiveness of these measures."

All the conservations groups urged Mainstream Canada, whose operations contribute to the sea lice problem in the area, to commit to fully integrating their farms into an interim protection plan.

The conservations groups supporting the proposed migratory corridor are:

Living Oceans Society, T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation, Watershed Watch, Georgia Strait Alliance, David Suzuki Foundation, Raincoast Conservation Society

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