

Emergency closure of five open net-cage salmon farms required to protect migrating salmon

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Vancouver, BC – Five open net-cage salmon farms must be permanently removed from a salmon migration route in the northern Georgia Strait in order to protect thousands of juvenile salmon from sea lice and other potentially fatal diseases, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform said Tuesday.



Wild Salmon Narrows. Map available at www.farmedanddangerous.org



Juvenile sockeye salmon with sea lice. Egg strings on female louse. Credit: Jody Eriksson

“The Wild Salmon Narrows, along the east and north side of Quadra Island, is a significant migration route for juvenile wild salmon from local rivers, the Fraser River, and in all likelihood, Washington and Oregon runs as well,” says Ruby Berry of Georgia Strait Alliance.

“It is imperative that the five open-net cage farms be removed from this narrow migration channel as an emergency measure to protect these critical salmon runs from the unnecessary risk posed by the open net-cage farms,” Berry said.

Thousands of salmon are currently traveling from British Columbia’s rivers to the ocean as part of their annual out-migration. There is mounting evidence that out-migrating Fraser River salmon, some of which belong to endangered stocks, are infected with sea lice and may be put at risk from fish farms in the region.

CAAR is calling on the federal and provincial governments to take immediate action to protect the area’s marine resources by removing open net-cage farms and by making a significant investment in commercial-scale closed containment for B.C. The coalition has devoted years of effort to fostering constructive change and to engaging in dialogue with industry and government. But governments and industry are failing to take substantive action and B.C.’s wild salmon, marine ecosystems and coastal communities continue to suffer from the impacts of open net-cage salmon farming.

“Industry has dragged its feet on transitioning to closed containment far too long, and while the government delays, wild salmon populations are being impacted by sea lice,” David Suzuki Foundation’s Corey Peet says. “No other region in the world is risking so many stocks of wild salmon with net pen salmon farms.”

The rich biodiversity of the Wild Salmon Narrows attracts many recreational tourists and provides local jobs that can only be sustained if wild fish and the marine ecosystem remain healthy.

“Wild salmon are being impacted by open net-cage salmon farming and commercial fishermen’s livelihoods are being threatened,” says David Lane of the T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation. “B.C. commercial fishermen and fish plant workers shouldn’t be losing out while a handful of Norwegian multinationals rake in profits from their farmed salmon feedlots. “

CAAR also demands that the four inactive tenures at the south end of this channel be relinquished.

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