

Wild Salmon the losers as zoning for massive new salmon farm approved by Regional District.

For Immediate Release

June 25, 2009, Vancouver, Courtenay, Sointula: The Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) today voiced their disappointment at the decision of the Strathcona Regional District to approve re-zoning that may allow a massive new salmon farm to operate in the wild salmon migratory bottleneck of Johnstone Strait. At 4,400 metric tonnes, the Gunner Point farm given the go-ahead by the Regional District would be one of the largest on the BC coast.

“It’s unbelievable that with all we know about the devastating impacts of these farms on the wild salmon stocks passing through this area as well as the local ecosystem, the Directors are willing to add a farm of this magnitude,” said Ruby Berry of the Georgia Strait Alliance, a CAAR member group. “We know the vast majority of citizens in the region strongly oppose this decision.”

The Directors did attempt to place some constraints on the farm such as transparent monitoring of sea lice levels on wild salmon in the region if the new site receives final approval from the Provincial government; however, BC’s industry has always operated in a shroud of secrecy and it is unlikely this government will enforce anything of the kind. They also failed to propose any remediation measures or the revocation of the license if mitigation measures are not adhered to.

“While we appreciate the Directors’ efforts to attempt to leverage an eventual transition to closed containment technology, this approval does not provide any incentive to the industry to do so.” said Michelle Young of the Georgia Strait Alliance.

“Wild salmon from the Fraser River, southern Vancouver Island and even Washington and Oregon States migrate through this narrow channel,” said Will Soltau of Living Oceans Society. “We are shocked the Regional District would support the delivery of this devastating blow to wild salmon populations.”

The final decision on these farms will now be in the hands of the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. CAAR will encourage concerned citizens to inform their MLA and the new Minister, Steve Thomson, of their opposition to any new net-cage sites in this wild salmon bottleneck.

As an emergency measure, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform is demanding the closure of five fish farms near Quadra Island to create one clear migration route for juvenile salmon migrating north through the Strait of Georgia.

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