

Media Release

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***Vancouver* - Minister's call for more chemicals to combat sea lice defies logic, science, and the public interest.**

As the remnants of once robust wild salmon populations now migrate past salmon farms in the Broughton Archipelago, Minister Pat Bell is promising to escalate a losing chemical battle against destructive sea lice emanating from farmed salmon.

Bell this week pledged “increased chemical treatments” of lice-bearing farmed salmon—despite calls for farm-free migration corridors and safe technology, and despite mounting concern over the effectiveness and abuse of such chemicals. Slice, the louse biocide of choice, is regularly used on an emergency basis as the cornerstone of a failed “sea lice action plan.” Bell’s call for the use of even more Slice comes despite Environment Canada concerns over the “unknown fate” of Slice in the marine environment (<http://www.watershed-watch.org/publications/files/EnvCan-ReviewofSlice.pdf>) and despite evidence Slice is becoming less effective at killing ever more resistant sea lice (<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0001549>).

“Overly rigid positions and current management practices are failing the fish and failing us,” said Dr. Craig Orr of Watershed Watch. “Escalated chemical warfare is not the answer to the crisis in the Broughton and can only undermine the public’s confidence in governments’ resolve around saving wild fish,” Orr continued.

One year ago, scientists gathered in Alert Bay in the Broughton issued a consensus statement agreeing that lice from farmed salmon are a grave, global threat to wild salmon (http://www.watershed-watch.org/publications/files/Aquaculture2007_final.pdf). Just recently, two peer-reviewed studies reconfirmed that farmed salmon are serious threats to the continued existence of wild pink salmon in the Broughton.

Sea lice at this time of year are typically at their highest numbers on farmed fish, and these lice can produce billions more infective lice that can kill juvenile wild salmon migrating near farms (http://www.watershed-watch.org/publications/files/Orr_2007.pdf).

Watershed Watch—a member of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform—is calling on government to adopt more effective, urgently needed, and less risky management actions to save wild fish.

“We know from Europe that more effective management is necessary to protect wild salmon from sea lice” said Watershed Watch fisheries biologist Stan Proboszcz. “We need to separate the wild and farmed fish by creating safe migration corridors and by moving to closed containment technology. And we need to do it before it’s too late.”

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Documents referred to above (in order):

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