

For Immediate Release

New Salmon Farm Approval Defies Public Opinion

Vancouver, BC-May 25, 2007—Environmental groups today decried Minister Pat Bell’s decision to approve a new open net-cage salmon farm just one week after the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture (SCSA) recommended fundamental improvements to the industry. A licence, near Gold River, B.C., has been granted to Norwegian multinational Grieg Seafood, the same company responsible for the recorded escape of 33,000 Atlantic farmed salmon in B.C. in 2004.

“The recommendations from the SCSA, which are founded on input from local and international scientists and concerned citizens have clearly been ignored,” said Dom Repta from Friends of Clayoquot Sound. “This is an absolute slap in the face to the entire public input process and clearly shows the Liberal government has no intention of becoming world leaders in sustainable aquaculture. Instead it’s status quo in B.C. with potentially disastrous consequences for wild salmon and coastal ecosystems and communities.”

The SCSA spent eighteen months seeking input from scientists, First Nations, conservation groups, industry and concerned communities to help them define sustainable salmon farming in British Columbia. The SCSA report reflects the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence that shows open net-cage salmon farms cannot co-exist in a sustainable manner with wild salmon and coastal ecosystems.

“Minister Pat Bell has made it clear his government will not respond to the SCSA recommendations until mid-summer,” said David Lane from T. Buck Suzuki Foundation. “Is this licence approval a signal that we can expect a fast tracking of approvals for the remaining 18 new farm applications?”

The majority of B.C. citizens accept the peer-reviewed science and support a transition to more sustainable practices for the industry. A new Strategic Communications poll (March, 2007) found 80.7 percent of British Columbians surveyed support a move to closed, contained salmon farm technology.

“It is completely inappropriate for the Minister to be approving a new open net-cage farm before the government has given thoughtful consideration to the recommendations of the SCSA,” said Catherine Stewart from Living Oceans Society.

“What British Columbians need now is investment in commercial-scale, ocean-based closed containment systems which protect the environment and create jobs with a new innovative technology that strengthens coastal economies,” said Ruby Berry of Georgia Strait Alliance.

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