

# The Fisherman

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# Scientists urge: act on sea lice

## Failure to contain farm lice is endangering wild salmon

*An open letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Premier Gordon Campbell.*

**W**e, the undersigned, are convinced by the published scientific evidence that the debate is over: sea lice breeding on farmed salmon are threatening BC's wild Pacific salmon. There are many threats to wild salmon; however there is now extensive peer-reviewed science that sea lice spread from farm to wild salmon and kill juvenile wild salmon. In some cases, sea lice originating from salmon farms are estimated to have killed up to 95 per cent of the wild juvenile salmon that pass salmon farms during their ocean migrations. This is unacceptable for any industry.

The scientific literature reports that sea lice infestations of wild, juvenile salmon are associated with salmon farms and wild salmon populations declines in several countries: Canada, Norway, Scotland, and Ireland.

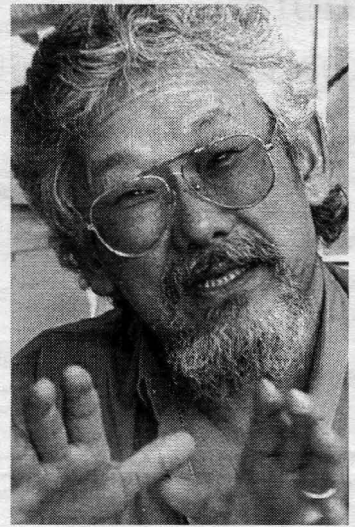
John Fredriksen, owner of Marine Harvest, one of the biggest salmon farming companies, both globally and in Canada, recently stated publicly: "I am concerned about the future for wild salmon. Fish farming should not be allowed in fjords with salmon rivers." (Norwegian newspaper *Altaposten* July 19, 2007). Earlier this year, the B.C. Special Legislative Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture recommended granting no new net pen farm licences and

moving all existing salmon farms into close-contained facilities. Despite this, Pat Bell, British Columbia's Minister of Agriculture and Lands, has granted three more net pen licences. In consultation with the salmon farming industry and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Pacific Salmon Forum spent \$315,000 of the public's funds collecting a baseline dataset to examine sea lice response to fallowing salmon farms. But as of today, Marine Harvest and Mainstream Canada have restocked their salmon farms spanning the entire Broughton Archipelago. Consequently, this definitive study is no longer possible.

We have united our voices because wild salmon are essential to life in the North Pacific and to the B.C. economy. We feel the weight of scientific evidence is enough to enact the precautionary principle. For wild salmon to survive in an era of major environmental stresses through global climate change, a pathogen barrier must be established between B.C.'s farmed and wild salmon populations; there are no scientific results to the contrary. Furthermore, we are warning the B.C. public that where farmed and wild salmon populations meet in narrow marine passages, as in Broughton and off Campbell River, we can expect long-term wild salmon stock decline if farmed salmon are not quarantined. When our government ignores the immutable natural law that



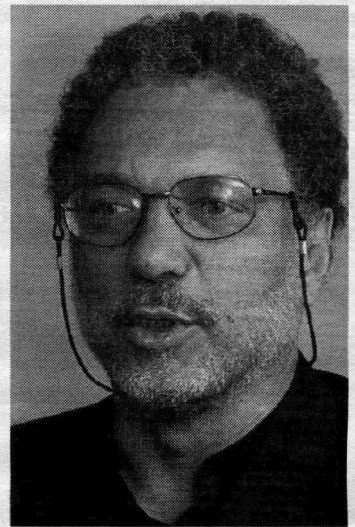
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disease is amplified when host populations are crowded, we pay the price of irreversible loss of a very valuable resource.

We the undersigned agree that based on the published scientific evidence, the only management action that can ensure the protection of wild salmon stocks from farmed salmon is a complete physical barrier to pathogen transmission between wild and farm salmon (closed containment) and/or removal of salmon farms from the major juvenile salmon migration routes. We are aware that such changes may have

economic consequences for the industry.

The science is clear. It is now up to the government and the people of Canada to decide whether the economic benefits of aquaculture, as currently practised, outweigh the threats to wild salmon and the ecosystems and economics that depend on healthy and abundant wild salmon populations.

We write this public letter out of a sense of duty to future generations.

Signed September 17, 2007.  
Respectfully,

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