



Disappearing the Wild Salmon

Documentary Exposes a Corporate-Government Nexus against the People, Local Industry, and Wildlife

by Kim Petersen / December 2nd, 2009

Over 10 million sockeye were forecast by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to arrive at the Stó:lō (Fraser River) to spawn, but something happened. The spawning run was only in the hundreds of thousands. Where did 10 million sockeye salmon disappear? First Nation peoples have subsisted for centuries from salmon returning to the Stó:lō; the river's salmon supported a large commercial fishery. Now there are fears that the Stó:lō/Fraser's sockeye fishery is commercially extinct. What caused this? Film-maker Damien Gillis identifies corporate salmon farms as the culprit. His [film](#), *Farmed Salmon Exposed: The Global Reach of the Norwegian Salmon Farming Industry*, presents a damning case of salmon farming's lethality on wild salmon.

Farmed Salmon Exposed begins at the birthplace of salmon farming — a nation that prides itself as progressive and at the forefront of sustainable development: Norway. However, Norway's image is tainted by its salmon farming corporations, such as Marine Harvest and Cermaq, which are killing wild salmon.



The repercussions from corporate salmon farming are myriad. The corporations farm unsustainably, disrupt local ecosystems, contaminate and degrade the marine environment, cause socio-economic dislocation, disrespect the rights of Original Peoples, and lobby susceptible governments against their people's and future generations's best interests.

The major profits from this activity — so destructive of the local environment and ecosystem — flows to shareholders elsewhere.

The solution is simple and has long been known: closed containment. It is only a partial solution since the farming of a predator like salmon is nutritionally unsustainable, requiring five kilos of protein in feed for each kilo of salmon produced. Moreover, the nutritional safety and quality of farmed salmon is dubious.

The documentary presents three primary concerns about salmon farms: sea lice, viruses, and escapes. These same problems plague salmon farming in Norway and plague other industries such as tourism. Norwegian politicians, though, have called for an increase in farmed salmon production.

However, with the intent to protect its wild salmon, Norway forbade salmon farming in some fjords. This appears *ipso facto* to be an admission that salmon farms endanger wild salmon.

Concerned people in other nations seek to protect their wild salmon as well. *Farmed Salmon Exposed* details the crises in Scotland, Ireland, “The Indian Territories”/BC, and Chile.

The Original Peoples of the Pacific Northwest have long been known as the salmon people. Bob Chamberlain of the Kwicksutaineuk-ah-kwaw-ah-mish Nation decried the salmon-farm caused despoliation of their traditional waters to Norwegians.

Marine Harvest officials declared that they would not leave BC, and the BC government sides with the foreign multinationals against its citizens and Original Peoples. Gail Shea, DFO minister, said on film that there was “no concrete analysis” of the sockeye collapse and that it was “too early to tell” if salmon farms were to blame. She said she was in Norway to “support *our* aquaculture industry in Canada because it is a very important part of our economy.” Instead of taking a precautionary approach until the safety of salmon farming can be established, the Canadian government gambles with the fate of wild salmon.

One can't help but scratch one's head. From a purely economic point-of-view, why would the federal government promote the interests of foreign multinationals (92 percent foreign ownership in BC) over the far more valuable BC commercial fishery, over the BC recreational fishery, over the province's largest industry — tourism? Where will it lead?

Gillis turns his camera to Chile and the devastation wrought by the Norwegian-owned salmon farms: excessive antibiotic use, hypoxic conditions leading to algal blooms, pollution, “a psychological crisis for the people,” illness and death of workers, and disregard for the indigenous Mapuche.

Greed for quick profits has cost the Norwegian multinationals in their Chilean operations. Having abandoned the initial salmon-farming ravaged areas in Chile, the Norwegians eye moving south into the pristine waters of the Mapuche in Patagonia.

Chileans are concerned. Citizens of BC have an additional concern: their wild salmon. University of BC professor Daniel Pauly tells *Farmed Salmon Exposed* concerned citizens need to mobilize in an “organized fashion” against poor salmon-farming practices. Dissent is occurring.

Part of the DFO's self-professed mission is working toward “Healthy and Productive Aquatic Ecosystems; and Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture.” The DFO, which presided over the collapse of the massive cod fishery on Canada's east coast, comes in for scathing criticism in the film, including from its former biologists, like Otto Langer.

Dedicated wild salmon biologist-activist Alexandra Morton is a voice of reason in the film. Recently, Morton has sought to force the federal government and DFO to protect wild fish.

Morton laid charges against Marine Harvest for illegal possession of juvenile wild salmon and called upon the

DFO to uphold the Fisheries Act and lay a charge themselves. Morton's activism has resulted in a judge in Port Hardy, BC, approving the charge and summoning Marine Harvest to appear in court.

Will Gillis document a victory for the common people (and wildlife) over corporate profiteers? Stayed tuned for the sequel.

Kim Petersen is co-editor of Dissident Voice. He can be reached at: kim@dissidentvoice.org. [Read other articles by Kim](#), or [visit Kim's website](#).

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4 comments on this article so far ...

Jenn Olsen said on December 2nd, 2009 at 10:44am #

This opinion and the opinions quoted are exactly that: opinions. No science to back this up.

1. Carnivore concern? What about salmon ranching in Japan, Alaska and Russia?
2. Feed conversion of 5 to 1? Not accurate – more like 2 to 1. But, what about chickens' pigs, dogs and cats that also eat fish meal?
3. Nutritional value of farmed vs wild? Both are scientifically proven to be very healthy for you.
4. Indians and aquaculture? What about the myriad of Indians directly involved in the business?
5. Illegal possession of juvenile wild salmon? It was 4 fish. Yep, 4 fish.

Your opinion is becoming tiring. Old and tiring.

Kim Petersen said on December 2nd, 2009 at 1:27pm #

Jenna, thanks for your comment/opinion? If you watch the film, you will note that it points to several studies in peer-review science journals.

1. I fail to see what your point is? Salmon farming is prohibited in Alaska. Thanks for making my point.
2. Even if it is 2 to 1, it is a negative outcome nutritionally. In your world, nuclear fission reactors would be a commercial reality. Cat feed is another topic. It is often stated that two wrongs don't make a right.
3. First, in science nothing is proven. The null hypothesis is rejected or not rejected. Second, you offer an opinion again. Here is the science that disputes your opinion: Hites et al. (2004). Global Assessment of Organic Contaminants in Farmed Salmon. *Science*. 303(5655): 226 – 229.
4. Your use of the term "Indian" reveals your level of cultural sensitivity. I have no idea what a "myriad of Indians" is. Where are your numbers?
5. There is also the illegal taken herring. Your numbers are wrong, and it doesn't matter. If someone steals one watch and not 10, then that's okay? What is your point?

As for tired and boring ... well, when a person has no facts or logic to back one's claims, such a person will often resort to ad hominem.

Annie Ladysmith said on December 2nd, 2009 at 11:10pm #

The whole world is going global. The nation states have practically ceased to exist in Europe. The global beastocrats do not care about people and national interests, and in fact are at WAR with the notion of individual self-evident rights, and the national charters that protect these rights.

They are manufacturing a GREAT FAMINE to decrease the population of the earth. It's all done by stealth so as not to enrage the masses. There are many fish that cannot be found in the wild oceans anymore, and it has been international corporate policy that has set the systems up to fail, they are not shy in their insane pursuit to eliminate the ordinary people, workers and peasants.

If you believe that the government of Canada, or Norway, have any interest in the livelihood of citizens then take a good look at how fast America is falling into bloody chaos. The idea that "government" is somehow the friend and protector of the citizens is a BIG FAT LIE. Believe it at your peril.

Jenn Olsen said on December 3rd, 2009 at 10:18am #

Hi Kim;

Here's my response to your (very defensive?) response;

1. You fail to see my point about salmon ranching in Alaska, Japan, Russia etc. Shame. Let me be clearer – combined, they raise over 5 billion salmon in hatcheries that are released into the ocean to graze for food. These are not intended to return to rivers to spawn. They are intended for human consumption – called salmon ranching. This is the same purpose as salmon farming. My point is valid: if one is concerned about the consumption of fish to feed fish, then salmon ranching needs to be included in the discussion. On the West coast of America the fish consumed by 'ranching' is far greater than that of 'farming' (not that we need to name them differently – it's all fish culture). I believe like you do that fish meal consumption needs to be a focus of future protein production – but a highly selective focus on a single producer doesn't help that discussion.
2. Your response about the health of wild and farmed salmon in fact proves my point. The Hites study proved that both wild and farmed salmon are a fraction of FDA concern levels for PCB, dioxins etc. (1-2% of the 2000 ppb concern level). Other studies, not as well promoted, prove the same.

By the tone of your opinion piece and subsequent response, I would assume that you have your mind made up and are only prepared to quote those who bolster your opinion...shame.