

AQUACULTURE COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture held hearings in the northwest in Kitkatla, Prince Rupert, Kitwanga, Hazelton, and Smithers. Over 150 people made submissions with the vast majority being opposed to fish farms proposed for northern waters.



Economic Study of Skeena Wild Salmon

In March 2006 a study on the economic value of Skeena wild salmon was released. The report produced by IBM Consultants showed that wild salmon of the Skeena River generate close to \$110 million annually in direct revenue.

The report findings show the wild salmon Skeena fishery is very much an economic driver in Northern British Columbia, on par with mainstays like

forestry. The total direct revenue from wild salmon of the Skeena River, one of British Columbia's three major salmon rivers and one of the most healthy, is close to the annual timber revenue from the Skeena watershed estimated by the BC government at about \$140 million.

The study, the first to value all revenues from wild salmon in BC, also showed close to half of the total direct revenue comes from commercial fishing, while the other half is comprised of tourism, sports fishing and the First Nations food fishery.

FIRST NATIONS TRIP TO NORWAY

In May 2006 a First Nations representative from Northern British Columbia joined a delegation to Norway to attend the Pan Fish Annual General Meeting. Pan Fish is the company proposing fish farms near the mouth of the Skeena. Eugene Bryant from the Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams delivered the proclamation from northwest First Nations declaring the Skeena a "wild salmon only" river to the Pan Fish AGM. Later he also delivered copies of the proclamation to the King of Norway and the Prime Minister. There was extensive media coverage in Norway and later in Canada.



WILD SALMON BANQUETS

Friends of Wild Salmon hosted Wild Salmon banquets and fundraising auctions in Smithers in fall 2005 and 2006. Residents and visiting fishermen came together at these events to celebrate Skeena wild salmon and show support for FOWS' work. The first dinner featured internationally known fishing guide and author Lani Waller. The guest speaker at the second dinner was Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia Inc. and a regular visitor to the Skeena. Each of the sold-out dinners raised over \$20,000.

COUNCILS & CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

In Spring 2006, FOWS delivered the presentation "The Business Case for Protecting Skeena Wild Salmon" to northwest municipal councils and Chambers of Commerce.

The following sent letters to the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture supporting FOWS' call for a fish farm moratorium: City of Terrace, Kitimat City Council, Kitimat-Stikine Regional District, District of New Hazelton, Village of Hazelton, Smithers Town Council, District of Houston, Bulkley-Nechako Regional District, Burns Lake Council, Smithers Chamber of Commerce, Burns Lake Chamber of Commerce, Houston Chamber of Commerce.

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2005-2006 AN OVERVIEW OF NORTHWEST OPPOSITION TO FISH FARMS



The Skeena River in northwest British Columbia has the second most abundant salmon runs in Canada and is a world-famous steelhead river. Until now, there have been no fish farms proposed for northern British Columbia waters.

Recently, however, 18 potential sites were identified near the mouth of the Skeena River. In other parts of the world where open net cage farms have been established near wild salmon runs, there have been serious impacts on the wild salmon.

FRIENDS OF WILD SALMON



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Friends of Wild Salmon steering committee meeting

FRIENDS OF WILD SALMON

In the winter of 2005, people from across the Skeena watershed from Prince Rupert on the coast to Telkwa, 250 km inland, came together to discuss their concerns about this threat to wild Skeena salmon and steelhead. Participants included a diverse mix of sports, commercial, and First Nation fishing groups as well as community organizations and individuals.

The first thing the group undertook was to sponsor a “Save Our Salmon” Summit in May 2005 to educate people across the region. The event also put pressure on politicians as it was held during a provincial election.

Following the Summit, it was decided to formalize the Friends of Wild Salmon (FOWS) coalition. First Nations, commercial fishermen, recreational anglers and guides put aside long-standing differences to work together with other residents concerned about potential fish farms in the north. A steering committee of 18 members from communities across the watershed was established, with a smaller working executive dealing with ongoing work.

FOWS has worked to educate residents and visitors on the values of the Skeena watershed and its wild salmon, as well as the threat of fish farms being proposed in northern waters. It has monitored the three permits actively under consideration and made representations to municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

Save our Salmon Summit

The initial focus of Friends of Wild Salmon was the organization of a “Save Our Salmon” summit bringing together people from across the northwest. The Summit was held in May 2005 at the Kitsumkalum Hall near Terrace and over 400 people from communities between Prince Rupert and Houston attended.

The Summit provided an opportunity for residents to hear from scientists who have been studying impacts of fish farms in southern B.C. and other parts of the world. It was also an opportunity to discuss the experiences

of people from southern B.C. and Alaska, who have dealt with the fish farm issue.

Participants at the Summit expressed concern about fish farms proposed for northern waters near the mouth of the Skeena River and agreed to work together to educate residents and decision makers about their concerns.



Right: First Nations speaker at the May 2005 Save Our Salmon Summit in Terrace.

Signs, pamphlets & Displays

Friends of Wild Salmon produced information pamphlets, which were disseminated in communities around the Northwest as well as through sport fishing guides and tourist facilities. Also in the summer of 2005, Friends of Wild Salmon erected signs along the Skeena River and on major northwest highways.

During spring and summer 2006, Friends of Wild salmon mounted informational displays at a variety

of events around the northwest including trade shows, music festivals, and fall fairs. The displays provided information on proposed northern fish farms and associated risks as well as on the economic value of Skeena wild salmon. They provided an opportunity for residents and visitors to register their concerns by signing resolutions calling for a halt to northern fish farm development. Since the original 4,000 resolutions were tabled in the BC Legislature in November 2005, a further 1,500 have been submitted to government.



FOWS reps deliver signed declarations to MLA Gary Coons in Victoria.

FISH FARM RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions calling for a halt to fish farm expansion in northern waters were circulated widely throughout the northwest. In November 2005 a delegation from the north including representatives of First Nations, commercial, and sport fishing organizations traveled to Victoria with 4,000 signed declarations. North Coast MLA Gary Coons tabled the declarations in the Provincial Legislature.



First Nations leaders declare the Skeena “Wild Salmon Only” at a rally in Prince Rupert

FIRST NATIONS DECLARATION OF THE SKEENA AS “WILD SALMON ONLY”

Responding to increasing concern about proposed fish farms near the mouth of the Skeena River, First Nations in the Skeena watershed decided to declare the Skeena a “wild salmon only” river – fish farm free. Wild salmon has provided sustenance and been critical to the culture and spirituality of Skeena First Nations for thousands of years. The declaration of the Skeena River as “wild salmon only” was in recognition of these values.

The Wet’suwet’en, Gitksan, Gitanyow, and Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw’alaams formally declared the Skeena a fish farm-free watershed at the first northern hearing of the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture in Prince Rupert. Holding banners

with the words, “True North – Fish Farm Free” and dressed in regalia, First Nations from across northern B.C. stood and drummed in solidarity at the opening of the hearings.

If their declaration is not honoured, First Nations say they will escalate their fish farm campaign using all legal political options available. They have also requested a face-to-face meeting with Premier Campbell.

OPINION POLL SHOWS 72 PERCENT OPPOSED TO NORTH COAST FISH FARMS

Friends of Wild Salmon commissioned a poll which was conducted by McAllister Opinion Research in April 2005. It involved a random sample of 600 B.C. adults, aged 18 and over, residing in the provincial ridings of North Coast, Bulkley Valley – Stikine, and Skeena (200 each).

RESULTS

Based on what you currently know, would you say you support or oppose allowing open-net salmon farms on the North coast?

SUPPORT – TOTAL: 15%
Strongly support: 6%
Somewhat support: 9%

OPPOSE – TOTAL: 72%
Somewhat oppose: 19%

Strongly oppose: 53%
Neutral/Don’t care: 5%
Refused: 9%

The B.C. provincial election was held in May 2005, shortly following the release of the above poll. As foreshadowed by the poll’s findings, the BC Liberal MLAs for the ridings of North Coast and Skeena – who supported fish farm expansion – both lost their seats to NDP candidates. Both NDP candidates called for a moratorium on fish farms.

OUR NEW LOGO!

The new Friends of Wild Salmon logo was designed by famous Canadian artist Roy Henry Vickers. You can purchase a variety of clothing items featuring the new logo on our website: www.friendsofwildsalmon.ca.

