



AQUACULTURE COMPANY, FIRST NATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION REACH UNPRECEDENTED “FIRST STEP” AGREEMENT.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Marine Harvest Canada and the nine member groups of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) today announced the completion of a “Framework for Dialogue” that will foster collaborative efforts toward solving the conflicts surrounding open net-cage salmon farming.

In recent years there has been heated debate around the relationship between net-cage fish farms, wild salmon and sea lice. This first step to establish a foundation for dialogue, research and potential solutions is intended to enhance the sustainability of this industry on the BC coast.

The Framework agreement promotes collaborative research on the extent of sea lice impacts on wild salmon, industry-NGO exploration of the current viability of closed tank systems, and, as an interim measure to reduce impacts of net-cage farming on wild salmon, explores establishing migratory corridors for wild juvenile salmon.

Marine Harvest and CAAR appreciate the support of the Provincial government in moving elements of this agreement to fruition and look forward to the Province’s continued assistance in implementation of the remaining components. The Province’s strong support for these discussions contributed significantly to the outcome.

“Our discussions with CAAR, now more than a year along, have allowed us to better understand each other’s perspectives.” said Clare Backman of Marine Harvest. “We are pleased that the Framework for Dialogue recognizes the need for economic viability of Marine Harvest’s operations and we see it as a path toward lasting solutions. We are very serious about finding solutions; if the ongoing research tells us that annual spring migratory routes are what is required, we will be restructuring our operations and relocating sites to make this a reality.”

As a first step towards addressing concerns, Marine Harvest will immediately move adult salmon from its farm at Glacier Bay in the Broughton Archipelago to another site more removed from a major migratory route of emerging juvenile salmon. While this action alone will not create a low-risk migratory route this spring (2006) it and other actions, including increased frequency of lice monitoring, may reduce the impacts of the fish farms on out-migrating wild salmon.

“We’re encouraged that one of the major aquaculture companies in B.C. is willing to consider moving in the right direction,” said Jennifer Lash, Executive Director of Living Oceans Society, a CAAR member group. “There is a tremendous amount of work ahead of us all, but we are very pleased that Marine Harvest is willing to discuss real change and hope this agreement will lead to more sustainable industry practices.”

The parties have committed to work on developing terms of reference for collaborative research and to jointly seek funding to support that research. The new agreement will also allow CAAR and its academic partners access to farms and lice data, an important step in resolving the conflict.

“We think this initiative holds promise,” said Chief Bob Chamberlin, Chairperson of the Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk Tribal Council (MTTC) and CAAR. “We see this “Framework” as an initial step towards addressing the concerns we have about the aquaculture industry’s activities within our traditional territories. Open net cage fish farmers need to change how they do business. And with the exploration of closed containment systems, we look forward to the day when the aquaculture industry is 100% responsible for any environmental impacts their activities generate. This type of agreement with the industry is long overdue.”

The Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform and Marine Harvest Canada are optimistic that this positive initiative will receive full federal and provincial support, including funding for essential elements, research and for the investigation of commercial scale closed containment aquaculture facilities.

For further information contact:

Clare Backman, Marine Harvest:
At: 250-286-1144 ext.

Jennifer Lash, Living Oceans Society (CAAR)
At: 250-973-6580

Chief Bob Chamberlin, MTTC (CAAR):
At: 250-974-7511

David Lane, T.Buck Suzuki (CAAR)
At: 604-519-3635

Chief Eric Joseph, MTTC (CAAR)
At: 250-974-4224

Chief Bill Cranmer, MTTC (CAAR)
At: 250-974-8460

Note to editors: A summary of the framework is available on request, or at:
www.marineharvestcanada-westcoast.com or www.farmedanddangerous.org

The CAAR member groups are: the David Suzuki Foundation, Georgia Strait Alliance, Friends of Clayoquot Sound, Living Oceans Society, Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk Tribal Council, Raincoast Conservation Society, Raincoast Research, T. Buck Suzuki Foundation, Watershed Watch Salmon Society