

For Immediate Release

Groups Call for Government Action on Aquaculture Committee's Key Recommendations

New Poll shows British Columbians' support closed, contained salmon farms.

VANCOUVER, BC -- May 16, 2007 -- The Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform¹ (CAAR) today applauded the key recommendations of the Special Legislative Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture and called on the provincial government to act immediately to implement the changes required. CAAR also released a poll showing 80.7 per cent of British Columbians surveyed support a transition to closed containment technology for salmon farms.

The Strategic Communications Omnibus poll sampled 606 B.C. citizens from March 15 – 27, 2007. Government investment in closed containment was backed by 80.7 percent of those surveyed. 70.7 percent supported a halt to open net-cage expansion until health and environmental concerns are resolved and 73.1 percent agreed the province should mandate salmon farms adopting containment technology even if it results in higher costs.

“The committee recommendation to transition to closed containment is completely in line with public opinion and concerns,” said Catherine Stewart of Living Oceans Society. “The people of BC want to see the government invest in closed containment and the Special Committee has recommended a path to get there. Now it is time for the government to act.”

CAAR groups note that the committee's report presents a balanced solution to supporting salmon farming in BC and the benefits it brings to communities, while addressing the need to stop the expansion of open net-cages and move to farming technologies that protect wild salmon and our oceans.

“We are very pleased that the Committee heard and is recommending action based on the solid weight of scientific evidence pointing to the insurmountable failures of open net-cage technology,” said Craig Orr of Watershed Watch. “A transition to closed containment would eliminate the environmental impacts caused by open net pens such as sea lice epidemics, sea lion and seal kills, and escaped farmed fish. It would also eliminate the potential economic impacts to our wild marine fisheries.”

Work is already well underway to see BC become an established world leader in sustainable salmon farming. "The Province doesn't need to re-invent the wheel," said David Suzuki Foundation marine conservation specialist, Jay Ritchlin. "There are entrepreneurs out there eager and ready to build closed systems this year and we encourage the government to support and expand on these efforts."

As part of an ongoing dialogue CAAR and Marine Harvest Canada, the biggest salmon farming company in B.C. are initiating a joint study to assess the technical and economic feasibility of ocean based closed containment systems. Marine Harvest and CAAR are urging the province to work with them when seeking answers to outstanding technical and economic questions.

¹ The nine members of CAAR are: David Suzuki Foundation, Friends of Clayoquot Sound, Georgia Strait Alliance, Living Oceans Society, Mugamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council, Raincoast Conservation Society, Raincoast Research, T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation and Watershed Watch Salmon Society.

CAAR strongly supports a ban on new farms in the North, an area currently free of net-cages. First Nations on the North Coast have made it clear they do not want salmon farms putting wild salmon at risk. The Gitxaala Clan Chiefs, Elders and Landholders have released a petition proving the majority of Gitxaala First Nation (Kitkatla) people are also opposed to salmon farming and opposed to the efforts of their current elected chief councilor to establish the industry in their traditional territory.

CAAR wants immediate measures to clean up the mess caused by the farms in the highly impacted areas on the East and West Coast of Vancouver Island. “The transition to closed containment must be expedited,” said Ruby Berry, Georgia Strait Alliance. “In the interim, we call on the Province to refuse to issue any new salmon farm licences and mandate a freeze on production increases at existing farms.”

“CAAR would also welcome efforts to reduce the pressure on wild, out-migrating juvenile salmon such as the creation of safe migratory routes as interim measures,” said Dom Repta of Friends of Clayoquot Sound... “But emergency action must not distract from the critical goal of achieving the lasting and long-term solution of shifting the farms to closed containment.”

Formed in 2001, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform is a coalition of nine member groups working to ensure salmon farming in BC is safe for wild salmon, marine ecosystems, coastal communities and human health. www.FarmedandDangerous.org.

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Full backgrounders available at: www.farmedanddangerous.org

Quick Facts:

- PublicEye Online reports the Committee’s economics report found only 2,945 direct, indirect and induced jobs are provided by salmon farming, whereas BC Stats Online reports that 14,300 jobs are provided by the commercial and recreational fishing sectors (not including processing or tourism numbers).
- Closed containment technologies are currently used to grow many types of seafood on a commercial scale: arctic char, trout, barramundi, tilapia, and others.
- A 2003, PriceWaterhouseCoopers conducted an assessment of a land-based system, Eco-Farm, in Norway and concluded that profitable land based fish farming is possible. (http://www.eco-farm.no/PWC_Final_Report.pdf)
- Closed, floating systems provide the best option for energy efficiency and the elimination of: solid waste to the environment, escapes, marine mammal kills, disease and parasite transfer to wild fish, and farm losses due to environmental factors.