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New Analysis Links Salmon Farms, Sea Lice, and Broughton Pink Salmon Crash

July 20, 2004 -

Independent scientific report released today by David Suzuki Foundation

VANCOUVER July 20, 2004 – An independent report released today by the David Suzuki Foundation adds to and strengthens the growing body of scientific evidence linking open-netcage salmon farms, sea lice, and lethal impacts to wild pink salmon in the Broughton Archipelago.

The report is authored by Ian Williams, a professional biologist with over 35 years of experience in fisheries research in BC. It reviews, and discounts, other possible factors leading to the extremely low levels of pink salmon returning in 2002 and strongly suggests that sea lice from fish farms in the area are the only remaining explanation for the severity of the observed crash.

The formerly little-known archipelago is currently the subject of heated debate, as concerned residents, scientists, local and international environmental groups, First Nations, and fishermen are again sounding the alarm about the deadly infestations of sea lice that appear to be decimating pink salmon stocks in the area.

The archipelago's ecologically rich and extensive shoreline has traditionally provided millions of pink salmon with a high-quality nursery area. However, local residents have been observing abnormally high numbers of dead and dying juvenile pink salmon as well as extreme sea lice infestation in the area since 2001.

Sea lice from the 27 commercial open-netcage salmon farms in the archipelago – the largest concentration of farms on the BC coast – are being singled out as the most likely explanation for a striking collapse in wild stocks.

Williams' report addresses many of the "research gaps" and counter-arguments put forward by governments and industry proponents.

"Governments have a responsibility to take precautionary action and, at a minimum, shut down open net pens in the Broughton Archipelago," says Jay Ritchlin, marine campaigner for the Suzuki Foundation. "The scientific evidence is compelling – the report speaks for itself."

A summary and a full report are available online at www.davidsuzuki.org/oceans

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