



Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance
#213 – 46693 Yale Road
Chilliwack, BC. V2P 7Z4
Cell: 604-316-2607
singingbear@telus.net

November 1, 2019

To: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, MP, Papineau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
The Honorable Andrew Scheer, MP, Regina-Qu'Appelle, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
The Honourable Jagmeet Singh, MP, Burnaby South, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
The Honourable Elizabeth May, MP, Saanich-Gulf Islands, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
The Honourable Yves-François Blanchet, MP, Beloeil—Chambly, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Subject: Testing for Disease Agent PRV and Removal of Ocean Fish Farms

First of all, congratulations on your respective successes in the 2019 federal election. This minority Liberal government opens up an opportunity for all parties to collaborate on issues of great importance to Canadians in every region of Canada.

We applaud the promises made by the Prime Minister, as well as Elizabeth May and Jagmeet Singh, to rid the Pacific coast of fish farms by 2025. Given the state of emergency confronting wild salmon, we are asking all federal parties to cooperate in passing legislation to phase out ocean fish farms at the earliest possibility. Failure to see collaboration to ensure that the last few years of marine salmon farming do not do further serious damage to wild salmon, will only breed cynicism and mistrust in Canada's democracy. The vast majority of British Columbians are in favour of moving fish farms from the ocean and put on land in containment. This has been recommended by the Pacific Salmon Foundation, the Union of BC Municipalities, various eco-tourism businesses, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, academics, scientists, Indigenous Nations along the migration routes of wild salmon, the Watershed Watch Salmon Society, Living Oceans, the David Suzuki Foundation, other environmental agencies, and so many others.

Immediate screening of farmed Atlantic salmon for the Norwegian strain of the Piscine Orthoreovirus (PRV) in fish farm hatcheries is urgently required now, instead of reckless decisions to put them in Pacific waters. The State of Washington passed legislation to phase out fish farms on their coast, and this included testing farmed Atlantic salmon before they are placed in marine pens. Consequently, some 1,600,000 infected farmed Atlantic salmon were prevented from being put into their coastal waters. In this country, two courts have ruled that the DFO policy to not test for PRV in fish farm hatcheries is unlawful and that DFO must revise this policy to align with the precautionary principle. Science publications have long accepted PRV as a disease agent and a contagious blood virus from the Atlantic Ocean that is harming wild Pacific salmon. In the high-density fish farm environment, PRV is known to mutate to higher virulence.

In light of the court orders to test for PRV, we were shocked when Rebecca Reid, Director General, Pacific Region, recently sent a letter to Dr. Alexandra Morton informing her that DFO will not only issue permits to transfer Atlantic salmon into marine pens without screening them for PRV, but will also sign permits for fish they know are infected. The Broughton First Nations have won the right to prohibit infected fish in their territorial waters. However, salmon know no borders and PRV-positive farm salmon will be going into their territories if DFO's reckless policy continues. This policy is in bad faith as it violates Indigenous rights and title that are enshrined in the Constitution of Canada, contravenes federal fishery regulations, and brushes aside the precautionary principle. The Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance is joining the call for an investigation into how this dangerous decision by DFO, in a "caretaker government mode," was made. This invites the unthinkable - extinction of already endangered wild salmon runs.

When the two fish populations (farmed Atlantic/wild Pacific salmon) occupy the same seawater, but are separated only by a net, out of control parasites and disease agents like PRV pass freely from farmed to wild fish. Tons of farmed salmon release toxic waste into the ocean. Fish farmers are using the ocean as a toilet. There is hard evidence showing that endangered herring and smolts wind up getting trapped in large numbers in fish farm pens.

With the current collapse of wild salmon, it is clearly imperative that the precautionary principle be applied in favour of wild salmon instead of farmed salmon.

We look forward to your responses to this pressing issue and urge collaboration to ensure immediate testing for PRV, and initiation of legislation to phase out fish farms from the Pacific coast.

Eddie Gardner, President
Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance

CC John Horgan, BC Premier
Chief Farron Soukochoff, Dzawada'enuxw First Nation
Chief Bob Chamberlin, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation
Chief Don Svanvik, Namgis First Nation
Jack Woodward, Q.C. Lawyer and Author, Wild Salmon Defence Fund
Brian Riddell, President and CEO, Pacific Salmon Foundation
Murray Ned, Executive Director of Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Dr. Alexandra Morton, Marine Biologist
Aaron Hill, President, Watershed Watch Salmon Society
Brenden Glauser, Communications Manager, David Suzuki Foundation
Tony Allard, Chairman, Wild Salmon Forever
Mayor Maja Tait, President, Union of BC Municipalities
Karen Wristen, Living Oceans