



Watching Out for BC's Wild Salmon

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New research suggests salmon farms and sea lice are the main cause of a 7-fold decrease in coho productivity in the Broughton Archipelago

VANCOUVER, BC – Two new sea lice papers published online in the Journal of Applied Ecology suggest that sea lice from salmon farms may be dramatically affecting the health of coho salmon populations in the Broughton Archipelago.

The first paper, co-sponsored by Watershed Watch Salmon Society, indicates that sea lice transmitted from pink salmon prey to coho predators increased infection on coho by 2 to 3 fold in salmon farming areas. The second paper, which looked at coho salmon returns from 1975-2007, found that infected coho in the Broughton Archipelago suffered a 7-fold decrease in productivity during a period of recurrent sea louse infestations associated with salmon farms, relative to unexposed coho populations.

SFU Ph.D. candidate Brendan Connors and several co-authors, including scientists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, took this first ever look at impacts on coho, and these findings add significantly to the weight of evidence that open net pen salmon farms can cause major declines in wild fish populations.

"Wild coho populations throughout B.C. have been in serious decline in recent years, moreover, they are a staple of B.C.'s sport fishery," says Craig Orr of Watershed Watch Salmon Society. "This should be a much-needed wakeup call to all who value wild salmon."

The B.C. Salmon Farmers Association and the Conservation Coalition – both participating in the Cohen Inquiry into the decline of Fraser sockeye salmon – presented opposing arguments to the Commissioner at a recent hearing regarding the release of disease, sea lice and stocking information from salmon farms along the known migration routes of Fraser River sockeye. The Conservation Coalition argued that the release of these data are critical to understanding the full impact of open net pen salmon farming on wild salmon that pass by the affected farms and a decision is pending. Connors' latest work argues strongly for full disclosure from industry and government with regards to fish health data on salmon farms.

To access the papers visit:

Predation intensifies parasite exposure in a salmonid food chain

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2664.2010.01887.x/abstract>

Coho salmon productivity in relation to salmon lice from infected prey and salmon farms

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2664.2010.01889.x/abstract>

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