

Watershed Watch Salmon Society

2009 Annual Report



Watershed Watch Salmon Society's mission is to catalyze efforts to protect and restore BC's precious wild salmon. Through scientific expertise, strategic alliances, outreach programs, and innovative projects, Watershed Watch is at the forefront in sounding the alarm on threats to salmon, and in prompting action to help them.

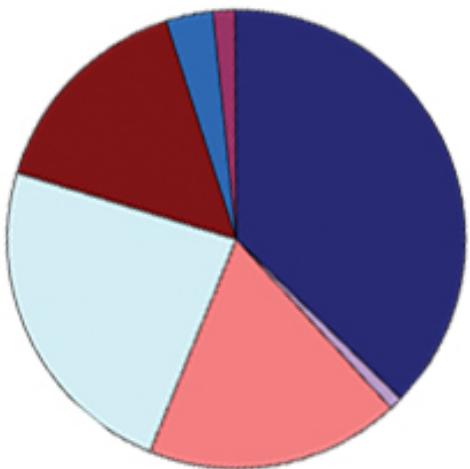
Introduction

Since 1998 Watershed Watch has been working on behalf of a concerned public to protect and restore BC's iconic wild salmon. As a leading voice for salmon, we provide an important bridge between scientific and technical information, and the people who can help us in our efforts to increase awareness and action around a wide range of habitat, harvest and fisheries management issues.

The pressures facing wild salmon remain relentless and challenging. Habitat loss, poor management, pollution, climate change, and unsustainable salmon farming practices require constant vigilance and action, neither of which are possible without the continued help of both the public and our financial supporters.

To sign up for our e-newsletter or to donate to Watershed Watch, please visit our website at www.watershed-watch.org.

Financial Summary



Wild Salmon	\$ 262,144
Sturgeon	\$6,634
Independent Hydropower	\$ 126,227
Aquaculture	\$ 165,425
Water	\$ 107,886
Marine Conservation Caucus	\$ 23,286
General	\$ 10,925
Total	\$ 702,527

New Staff

Aaron Hill previously worked with Watershed Watch as a contractor on water and fisheries related projects. We were fortunate to add Aaron to our permanent staff in 2009 as our newest Ecologist. Aaron specializes in freshwater and coastal ecosystems, with an emphasis on salmon habitat and fisheries. He has worked as an observer and fisheries technician on recreational and commercial fisheries, and as a graduate researcher on the Salmonid Rivers Observatory Network research program in BC. Aaron's current focus is the Wild Salmon Policy implementation and ecological sustainability of energy development in BC.

Our Work, Our Supporters

Watershed Watch owes a debt of gratitude to our many individual and major supporters. Our 2009 conservation campaigns were funded mainly by the following supporters:

- Babine Norlakes Lodge
- Bob Meiser
- Bridge Coastal Restoration Program
- Bullitt Foundation
- City of Coquitlam
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- Headwaters Initiative
- Kingfishers Rod and Gun Club
- Kwikwetlem First Nation
- Liber Ero Foundation
- Luna Trust
- Metro Vancouver
- Mountain Equipment Co-op
- Orange County Community Foundation
- Patrick Hodgson Family Foundation
- RBC Employee Volunteer Grant Program
- RedI Sports Distributors
- Save Our Salmon
- Sierra Club of BC Foundation
- Somerset Foundation
- Steelhead Society
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Tides Canada
- Totem Flyfishers
- Vancouver Foundation
- Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation
- Whistler River Adventures

Protecting Wild Salmon from Aquaculture Threats

Once again Watershed Watch devoted considerable time and effort to bring attention to unsustainable aquaculture practices in 2009. Watershed Watch took action to protect wild salmon through our education and outreach programs—including providing advice for First Nations working to further understand and minimize salmon farming impacts in their territories. As a founding member of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), Watershed Watch also worked with industry and government to reduce sea lice impacts, and to establish wild fish monitoring programs, especially in the hard hit Broughton Archipelago.

New Film: Aquacultural Revolution

Working with filmmaker Damien Gillis, Watershed Watch produced the documentary style film [Aquacultural Revolution: The scientific case for changing salmon farming](#). The film interviews many prominent scientists and First Nation leaders who speak frankly on the salmon farming industry and the problems associated with it. Before the May 2009 provincial election—and as a lead up to the full film—Watershed Watch and Save Our Rivers Society released the short preview *Vote to Protect Wild Salmon* that highlighted the weight of evidence documenting the negative impacts of open-cage salmon farming.



Supporting Aquaculture Research

Watershed Watch Executive Director, Craig Orr, continued his role on Ph.D. candidate Brendan Connors' thesis committee in 2009. Connors' research focuses on understanding important dynamics of sea lice ecology and transmission. Watershed Watch also supported Connors' work through a grant from Mountain Equipment Co-op. Watershed Watch believes that an improved understanding of lice and ecosystem dynamics can help inform and improve resource management.

Coordinated Area Management Plan for the Broughton Archipelago

In efforts to protect wild salmon from the many impacts of open net pen salmon farming, CAAR continued its negotiations and work with Marine Harvest Canada by helping develop a Coordinated Area Management Plan for the Broughton Archipelago. This plan introduced a springtime fallow route through the region in an attempt to minimize sea lice levels on outmigrating wild juvenile salmon. As an interim measure in our goal of a coast-wide transition to closed containment salmon farming, the plan seems to have provided some relief to the area's beleaguered wild salmon, and ongoing research sponsored by CAAR's supporters might further improve salmon farming operations and practices, and protection of wild salmon.

Wild Salmon Narrows Campaign

In 2009, CAAR also launched a new [Wild Salmon Narrows Campaign](#). The campaign calls for emergency protection for wild salmon migrating through northern Georgia Strait and demands the removal of the five active salmon farms in Okisollo Channel—clearing a critical migration route of open net cage salmon farms to reduce the pressure of sea lice infection on juvenile wild salmon. Recent research indicates that Fraser River sockeye, as well as other runs of wild salmon, are being infected with sea lice as they migrate past salmon farms in the northern Georgia Strait. Watershed Watch also partnered with Raincoast Conservation Foundation to further examine the impact of sea lice on Fraser sockeye.



Aquaculture Media and Outreach

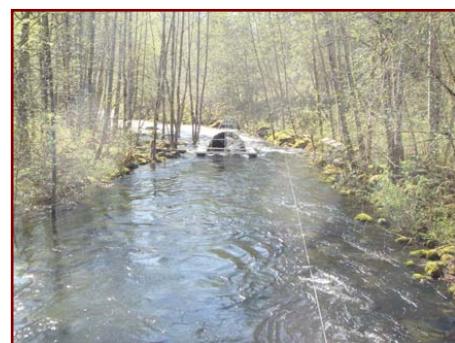
- [Environmental groups commend salmon forum's acknowledgement of fish farm problems, demand government action on key recommendations](#) (CAAR Media Release, February 5, 2009)
- [Sea lice can affect Cariboo sockeye stocks: biologist](#) (Williams Lake Tribune, March 3, 2009)
- [Letter to the Pacific Salmon Forum from CAAR asks for clarification on acceptable levels of sea lice on juvenile wild salmon](#) (March 18, 2009)
- [Fraser sockeye may be at risk of sea lice infection from salmon farms](#) (CAAR Media Release, March 23, 2009)
- [Emergency closure of five open netcage salmon farms required to protect migrating salmon](#) (CAAR media release, June 16, 2009)
- [Critics seek closure of five BC salmon farms](#) (The Province, June 18, 2009)
- [Research Indicates Lower Levels of Sea Lice in 2009 in Broughton Archipelago](#) (CAAR and MHC Media Release, July 22, 2009)
- [Sea-lice levels bring hope to fish farms](#) (The Province, July 23, 2009)
- [Fish farms magnify sea lice problem](#) (Nanaimo News Bulletin, July 29, 2009)
- [Dear Norway: Help Save Canada's Wild Salmon](#) (Watershed Watch signs on to Pure Salmon Campaign's letter to the King of Norway, August 17, 2009)
- [Toxic contamination will linger at Island salmon farm site, government finds](#) (Vancouver Sun, August 25, 2009)
- [Salmon farms need to be removed](#) (Courier-Islander, September 4, 2009)
- [Global Week of Action on Salmon Farming](#) (November 9-14, 2009)
- [Salmon Aquaculture in BC](#) (Presentation to the Marine Biology Section of Nature Vancouver, November 12, 2009)
- [Video of Craig Orr Discussing Recent Meeting with Minister Shea](#) (Video by Damien Gillis of Save Our Rivers Society, September 16, 2009)

Science Support for Kwikwetlem First Nation

Sturgeon, eulachon and Coquitlam River sockeye all benefited from Watershed Watch's close relationship with the Kwikwetlem First Nation, a small but important ally whose name literally means "Red Fish Up the River". As the environmental advisor to the Kwikwetlem First Nation, Watershed Watch helps coordinate research on sturgeon and eulachon populations near numerous Gateway highway construction projects, as well as continuing to aid in the restoration of sockeye salmon to the Coquitlam River.

Working to Get Red Fish Up the River—Again

After the exciting 2008 return of sockeye salmon to Coquitlam Lake for the first time in more than a century, it was a difficult year in 2009. Too few juvenile sockeye escaping in previous years led to a disappointingly unsuccessful trap and transfer program for Coquitlam sockeye. We pushed for changes to the release of juvenile salmon past the dam and a trap net is now being used in the reservoir to assess and aid smolt outmigration. The Kwikwetlem Salmon Restoration Program Committee



(KSRP) is aiming to once again see more red fish up the river. The KSRP includes representatives from BC Hydro, Metro Vancouver, Kwikwetlem First Nation, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, BC's Ministry of Environment, cities of Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam, and environmental groups including Watershed Watch Salmon Society, North Fraser Assistance Program and the Maple Creek Streamkeepers.

Sturgeon Telemetry

Watershed Watch again partnered with the Kwikwetlem First Nation, LGL Consulting Ltd. and the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society on a sturgeon tagging and telemetry to determine sturgeon movement near the proposed Gateway construction sites for the new Port Mann and Pitt River bridges in 2009. This study provides information on the number of sturgeon and their routes of travel and key habitat.

Fraser River Eulachon in Trouble

A once-rich abundance that fed people, fish and ecosystems has dwindled in numbers but not in importance for a healthy Fraser River. Kwikwetlem First Nation and Watershed Watch are deeply concerned about the state of Fraser eulachon and, worried about potential development impacts associated with Gateway project construction, began working with LGL to study the habitat and status of this keystone fish. The study focuses on the Fraser River area near the Port Mann Bridge and Douglas Island. The interim report [Fraser River, Port Mann-Douglas Island Eulachon Study](#), provides an overview of this research.



Coquitlam River Media and Outreach

- Watershed Watch receives funding from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation to develop an outdoor outreach display detailing sockeye restoration in the Coquitlam River (June 25, 2009)

Improving Water Management

Though the connection between salmon, healthy streams and properly managed and protected groundwater resources is scientifically documented, groundwater usually slides into the "out of sight, out of mind" category for most resource management planning. Groundwater use is almost entirely unregulated, as BC's current water policy focuses mainly on surface water. Thanks to support from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and the Bullitt Foundation, Watershed Watch strives to change this and to improve overall water management, increase consideration for wild salmon in water policy, and raise public awareness of the importance of groundwater.

The Critical Importance of Water

To help improve understanding and action around the importance of groundwater and proper water management, Watershed Watch developed two reports in 2009. [Fish Out of Water: Tools to Protect British Columbia's Groundwater and Wild Salmon](#) offers information on water management and critically needed tools to protect BC's water and salmon, and was produced with the help of several First Nation partners.

[Groundwater & Healthy Streams: It's All Connected](#) discusses the importance of groundwater and the vital connection between groundwater, streams and salmon. This work was funded by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation with additional support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the Kingfishers Rod and Gun Club.



Testing Our Political Parties' Water Savvy

The May 2009 provincial election presented opportunity new stage to bring water management into the limelight and increase public awareness of critical water issues. Watershed Watch joined with several conservation groups to develop a [survey on freshwater management](#) for BC's political parties to test whether proper water management was a priority for each party. Sadly, [results from the survey](#) indicated the leading political parties failed to understand the urgent need to adequately protect and manage BC's water resources. The questions were developed with Ecojustice, Raincoast Conservation Foundation, Sierra Club of Canada - BC Chapter, T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation, West Coast Environmental Law, Western Canada Wilderness Committee and POLIS Project on Ecological Governance.

Reforming BC's Water Act

BC's *Water Act* is in desperate need of an overhaul, and thankfully, the provincial government agrees. As part of the Living Water Smart program, the BC Ministry of Environment held public consultations to determine how to best reform BC's out of date water policy. To inform these consultations, Watershed Watch hosted a meeting for BC NGOs on December 2, 2009 to assess needed reforms to BC's *Water Act* and to develop a [Statement of Expectations](#), signed by 29 NGOs. The Statement details key steps that must be taken to protect BC's water and urges the BC government to take action on these recommendations.

Water Management Media and Outreach

- [Water smart? We won't be if the promises aren't acted on](#) (Vancouver Sun, March 17, 2009)
- [Survey shows politicians failing public by ignoring BC water crisis](#) (Media release, May 8, 2009)
- [River Diversion Hydrological Concerns](#) (Letter to Minister Penner, MOE, August 19, 2009)
- Presentations from the Water Act Reform Meeting for BC NGOs (December 2, 2009):
 - [Water Law and Stream Health in BC](#), Craig Orr and Tanis Gower, Watershed Watch
 - [BC Groundwater Law](#), Linda Nowlan
 - [Governance and Water Act Modernization in BC](#), Oliver M. Brandes, POLIS Project
 - [Water Allocation in BC](#), Randy Christensen, Ecojustice Canada

Protecting BC's Rivers from the Energy 'Gold Rush'

The development of 'clean' energy projects in BC continues to rush forward—well ahead of adequate policies and legislation to ensure that these projects are planned and managed in a way that makes them truly environmentally friendly. Watershed Watch has been very active on this issue, sounding the alarm on the dangers improperly planned IPP projects pose to BC's rivers, wild salmon, and wild places. In 2009, demand for our reports on run-of-river hydropower remained high and we expanded our outreach on this issue to ensure that the public is aware that the sheer scale of several proposed projects makes them anything but 'green'.

Bute Inlet Under Siege

Bute Inlet took centre stage in the run-of-river hydro debate in 2009. With a proposed development involving 17 river diversions, 1027 MW peak generating capacity, the construction of 443 km of new transmission lines, 267 km of permanent roads, and 142 bridges in wilderness areas, the footprint rivals the massive Site C project planned for the Peace River, and clearly puts to rest the notion that all IPP projects are small, environmentally friendly endeavours.



Ensuring that the public was aware of what was at risk in Bute Inlet was a major focus for Watershed Watch in 2009, especially once the provincial government failed to provide adequate opportunity for the public to voice their concerns on this project. Watershed Watch organized public meetings in Vancouver and Victoria and developed [Bute Inlet data files](#) that run in [Google Earth](#) showing the scale of the proposed Bute Inlet project.

Building a Vision for Green Energy in BC

Watershed Watch partnered with Simon Fraser University's Continuing Studies in Science on [Building a Vision for Green Energy in BC](#), November 3-4, 2009. This public meeting included presentations, panels and dialogue, and provided an opportunity to explore current opportunities and challenges facing IPP development in BC, whether or not we are on the right path, and what is needed for better decision making. Watershed Watch's Tanis Gower and Aaron Hill presented [Cumulative Environmental Effects: Towards an Appropriate Assessment Framework for Renewable Energy Development in BC](#). Additional presentations from the meeting are available on [SFU's website](#).

Energy Media and Outreach

- [Letter voicing concern over Fitzsimmons Creek run-of-river hydro project](#) (January 27, 2009)
- [Bute Inlet Hydroelectric Project in Google Earth](#) (February 1, 2009, to download the free program Google Earth visit <http://earth.google.com>)
- [South Coast Run-of-River Hydro Projects in Google Earth](#) (February 9, 2009)
- [Public Meeting on Unprecedented Private Hydro Project Coming to Vancouver](#) (Media release, February 4, 2009)
- [Public Meeting on Unprecedented Private Hydro Project Coming to Victoria](#) (Media release, February 4, 2009)
- [The Bute Inlet Hydroelectric Project](#) (Media backgrounder, February 5, 2009)

- Craig Orr on CBC Radio One Discussing the Bute Inlet Hydropower Project (February 10, 2009)
- [IPP rush destroying watersheds](#) (Times Colonist, February 11, 2009)
- [Environmental groups at odds over river power](#) (Terrace Standard, April 14, 2009)
- [Energy issues split parties, public in election](#) (Vancouver Sun, April 18, 2009)
- [Dry up run of river gold rush](#) (Terrace Standard, May 4, 2009)
- [Power Struggle: Two takes on the run-of-river debate](#) (BC Business, May 6, 2009)
- [Libs' River Power Push: Dangers, but Little Data](#) (The Tyee, May 11, 2009)
- [Independent power producers relieved with Liberals' win](#) (Vancouver Sun, May 14, 2009)
- [Sedan Creek power project likely to be shelved](#) (Vancouver Sun, May 15, 2009)
- [Comments to the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment, and Natural Resources Regarding Changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act in Bill C-10, Budget Implementation Act](#) (Brief by Watershed Watch Ecologist Aaron Hill to the Senate Standing Committee on Energy on the Navigable Waters Protection Act, May 12, 2009)
- [Government clears way for greener power expansion](#) (Vancouver Sun, October 30, 2009)
- [Environmental Groups Recommend New Approaches to Clean Electricity in BC](#) (Media Release, December 17, 2009)
- [Recommendations for Responsible Clean Electricity Development in British Columbia](#) (Backgrounder, December 17, 2009)
- [B.C. urged to slow green power development](#) (Vancouver Sun, December 17, 2009)
- [More dialogue needed around energy exports: environmental groups](#) (The Tyee, December 17, 2009)

Protecting Salmon: The Watershed Way

As our name implies, Watershed Watch views salmon conservation from a ‘watershed’ point of view. Salmon are affected by many harvest and habitat issues in both freshwater and marine ecosystems, and our focus is thus both broad and specific. We strive to improve conservation of wild salmon through engagement at many levels, including the important work of many who push for the full implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy. We believe the WSP is critical to helping Canada achieve an overarching management framework to conserve BC’s salmon into the future. Our mandate includes our ongoing efforts to promote sustainable salmon harvest as a conservation sector representative on the federal government’s Integrated Harvest Planning Committee, as well as our long-running partnership with Simon Fraser University’s Speaking for the Salmon series.

Pushing for Full Implementation of the WSP

Our accomplishments in 2009 to promote the WSP include participating in two Pacific Scientific Advice Review Committee meetings (benchmarks and habitat indicators) as well as hosting a workshop on the role of enhancement within the WSP in partnership with SFU. Working with the David Suzuki Foundation and Dr. Julie Gardner, we also produced a new report, [Knowledge Integration in Salmon Conservation and Sustainability Planning](#) in an attempt to provide further constructive input to support the effective implementation of Strategy 4 of the WSP. The report provides 30 recommendations in seven themes: Recognizing different knowledge frames; Determining what information is needed; Collecting and processing information; Providing access to information; Addressing uncertainty; Improving communication across knowledge frames; and Using structures approaches for applying knowledge.

Community Dialogue on Interior Fraser Coho

Watershed Watch co-sponsored a [Speaking for the Salmon workshop on Interior Fraser Coho](#) in Kamloops, BC June 23-24, 2009. The public meeting focused on exploring the legislation and policy protecting wild salmon in BC by examining the case study of the Interior Fraser coho salmon.

Fighting the MSC Rubber Stamp

Although Watershed Watch appreciates the potential value of market-based certification programs that help consumers make wise, environmentally conscious decisions, we spent considerable time and resources in 2009 fighting ‘rubber stamp’ certifications that fail to honestly reflect the diminished status of fisheries. The Marine Stewardship Council’s (MSC) decision to consider certifying Skeena and Fraser River sockeye as ‘sustainable’ caused Watershed Watch to partner with SkeenaWild Conservation Foundation to object to these decisions and issue the media release [Fisheries that target endangered salmon on track to receive “sustainability” label.](#)

Fraser River Salmon Table Public Meeting

Watershed Watch participated in the [Fraser River Salmon Table Public Meeting](#), October 22, 2009. The meeting focused on ways to bolster trust in one-another’s catch accounting as the basis for improving relationships and management. Members of the Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum’s Monitoring and Compliance Panel (including Watershed Watch) joined local representatives to reflect upon lessons learned, examined a case study in monitoring and compliance in the lower Fraser salmon fishery, and discussed a monitoring and compliance field tour.

Think Tank of Scientists on Fraser Sockeye

Watershed Watch participated in a Speaking of Science workshop [Adapting to Change: Managing Fraser sockeye in the face of declining productivity and increasing uncertainty](#) on December 9, 2009. A [Statement from the Think Tank of Scientists](#) was developed summarizing the problems with declining Fraser sockeye productivity and making recommendations on how to improve the situation.

Proceedings Report from Salmon and Nutrients Workshop

The proceedings report from the December 8, 2008 Speaking for the Salmon workshop [Salmon and Nutrients: A seminar on science and policy](#) was published in July 2009. Watershed Watch was a sponsor of the workshop which aimed to: 1) Examine potential influences of salmon nutrients on their ecosystems, and 2) Identify the role of the Wild Salmon Policy in delivering sufficient marine-derived salmon nutrients to freshwater and riparian ecosystems.

Marine Conservation Caucus

Watershed Watch continued to serve as both Chair and Secretariat of the Marine Conservation Caucus—an official consultation body of the conservation sector with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Following up on recommendations from the November 2008, workshop *Strengthening Marine and Freshwater Conservation in BC* was a focus for 2009. The [Workshop Summary Report](#) was distributed in February 2009. For more information on the MCC, see www.mccpacific.org.

Chum Fishery Monitoring

As part of its ongoing work on harvest reform and fisheries monitoring, Watershed Watch monitored the October 27, 2009 gillnet chum fishery aboard the Ryan D. Craig Orr, also a member of the Monitoring and Compliance Panel, observed 9 sets (limited to 20 minutes or less to reduce by-catch mortality). A total of 94 chum, 7 coho, 1 chinook and 1 sturgeon were caught, with only chums kept. Coho (3 wild, 4 hatchery) were revived in a recovery box and released.



Conservation Media and Outreach

- Outreach display at the Capilano Suspension Bridge (April 22-26, 2009 in celebration of Earth Day)
- [What is your government doing for wild salmon?](#) (Georgia Straight, April 7, 2009)
- Outreach display at Port Moody Fingerling Festival (May 2, 2009)
- [Does a carbon tax make the Liberals green?](#) (Times Colonist, May 6, 2009)
- Press Conference: Our rivers, wild salmon and the public interest - [Highlight video of panel](#) (May 6, 2009)
- [Low sockeye numbers prompt closure of Fraser fishery](#) (The Province, July 27, 2009)
- [Fraser sockeye not 'sustainable', groups say](#) (BC Local News, August 4, 2009)
- [Upstream fight for salmon](#) (Nanaimo Daily News, August 4, 2009)
- [Disaster for sockeye as run size cut to a tenth of forecast](#) (Chilliwack Progress, August 11, 2009)
- [Sockeye run looking like a disaster](#) (Maple Ridge News, August 13, 2009)
- [Fish biologist links fish farms to disappearing Fraser River salmon](#) (Georgia Straight, August 13, 2009)
- [Millions of salmon disappear from Canadian River](#) (Reuters, August 13, 2009)
- [Millions of salmon fail to turn up in Canada](#) (French press agency AFP, August 13, 2009)
- [The sockeye are missing from the Pacific Coast's most abundant salmon breeding river](#) (Cold Truth Blog, August 14, 2009)
- [Poor ocean survival blamed for returns](#) (Vancouver Sun, August 15, 2009)
- [Millioner av laks forsvant på mystisk vis i Canada](#) (Norwegian newspaper Dagbledet, August 15, 2009)
- [Fishing for answers](#) (Salmon Arm Observer, August 18, 2009)
- [Various factors may be combining to hit Fraser River sockeye](#) (Vancouver Sun, August 31, 2009)
- [Dwindling salmon stocks poorly managed: biologist](#) (CBC, September 9, 2009)
- [Who's looking after sockeye?](#) (Vancouver Sun, September 10, 2009)
- Outreach display at BC Rivers Day at Williams Park (September 27, 2009)
- [State of Wild Salmon](#) (Craig Orr's presentation to the Pacific Salmon Foundation, October 2, 2009)
- Participated in the [Fraser River Salmon Table Public Meeting](#) (October 22, 2009)
- [Harper orders judicial inquiry into collapse of BC salmon runs](#) (Vancouver Sun, November 6, 2009)
- [BC Salmon Inquiry](#) (Audio from CBC As It Happens, November 6, 2009)
- [Inquiry to fry biggest fish as it takes stock of sockeye decline; DFO faces intense scrutiny over farms, conflict of interest](#) (The Province, November 8, 2009)
- [Fishing for answers](#) (FOCUS Magazine, November 2009)