

June 17, 2009
MHC Release
For Immediate Release
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Concern for Fraser River sockeye also a concern to Marine Harvest Canada

Campbell River, BC. Out-migration Fraser River sockeye salmon using a channel north of Quadra Island has raised concern from the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) about the potential impact on these fish from aquaculture operations, including two Marine Harvest Canada (MHC) farms.

“Fraser River sockeye are one of the most important and valuable salmon stocks in BC waters,” says Clare Backman, Biologist and Director of Environmental Relations at MHC. “Like everyone else in BC, the 530 people of Marine Harvest want to protect them for future generations.”

“But we believe the best way to do this is to start with an accurate and realistic assessment of the problems and challenges that face these fish,” says Backman. “CAAR’s press release really doesn’t offer much solid science.”

Backman adds that the only paper referred to by CAAR in its release had a small and statistically insignificant sample size of seven (7) fish and did not show any mortality effects. Other published science shows that the Fraser River sockeye are, by the time they reach MHC farms in the Campbell River area, much larger than the minimum size (0.7 grams) noted as being susceptible to harm from sea lice.

The predominant species of louse found on these sockeye is also a different species than that found most commonly on MHC farmed Atlantic salmon.

The scientific evidence on the relationship of Pacific salmon and sea lice, gathered from a variety of independent sources over the past few years, indicates the risk to juvenile wild fish from sea lice is low and manageable. Nonetheless, MHC continues to work with CAAR and others to ensure our salmon farms do not pose a risk to out-migrating wild salmon.

“We invite CAAR to join us in encouraging research into this important issue about just what the threats are to sockeye, be it over-fishing, habitat protection issues, warming water temperatures, or salmon farms,” says Backman.

“We also call on Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the provincial government to participate.”



Sea lice are a natural occurring parasite found on many fish in the Pacific Ocean, including all species of salmon. Sea lice are initially passed to farm-raised salmon from wild sources and are then monitored and managed to ensure that farm-raised salmon are not a source of sea lice for out-migrating juvenile salmon. This management program has been in place since 2003.

Marine Harvest Canada and CAAR are in year four of a dialogue which helps to “increase knowledge with respect to environmental, social and economic factors associated with salmon farming.” The two areas of focus have been the interaction between wild salmon, farmed salmon and sea lice, and the economic and environmental feasibility of commercial scale closed containment.

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