

## **Low salmon returns hurting British Columbia's nature based tourism!**

(Campbell River, British Columbia, September 18, 2008) The Dept of Fisheries & Oceans numbers are in: Pink salmon returns to the Broughton Archipelago and Knight Inlet (east of Port Hardy and Port McNeill) are at record lows - worse than the collapse of pink stocks in 2002, when the fish farms were forced to fallow (temporarily close). Craig Murray, owner of Nimmo Bay Resort, has fished and flown over the rivers of the Broughton for the past 25 years and said this is the poorest year he has seen for salmon returns.

“In BC both levels of government refuse to accept that salmon farms, as they currently operate, are causing irreparable damage to our wild salmon stocks. Effectively fallowing farms and closed containment of the Atlantic salmon are solutions that should be in place now. Our wild salmon resource is far too precious to gamble with in a game of government roulette” stated Murray.

The collapse was predicted for this year and was based on the “outrun” data of juvenile pinks in the spring of 2007 when many young pinks were found dying from sea lice. It is well documented that juvenile pink salmon are highly susceptible to the artificially huge numbers of sea lice that are generated at fish farms located on the pinks’ migratory routes.

The salmon situation is starting to wreak havoc on nature based tourism located in the area. The decrease in pink salmon will have repercussions up and down the food chain whether on land or at sea.

Howard Pattinson, owner of Tide Rip Tours, a grizzly bear viewing business based out of Telegraph Cove, has observed grizzly bears unable to find salmon an important source of protein and trying to prepare for hibernation feeding only on berries and grass. “Many females will not find enough to eat and will abort their fertilized embryos. Adult males have also been known to eat young cubs when starving; and cubs that can’t find food this fall won’t make it through the winter” said Pattinson.

Donna and Bill Mackay, owners of Mackay Whale Watching out of Port McNeill, have been on the forefront of salmon and orca habitat protection for many years. They have observed that orcas are not socializing as much between pods due to their preoccupation with searching for food. Mr. Mackay noted, “This year only 41% of the total northern resident population of orcas have made an appearance in the Queen Charlotte and Johnstone Straits down from almost 100% which is from our 30 year data set.”

Dean Wyatt, owner of Knight Inlet Lodge located in Glendale Cove, is concerned that whole coastal valleys are losing wildlife due to the lack of salmon. “If the wildlife go, then so does the \$1.4 billion nature based tourism industry” said Wyatt.

The Wilderness Tourism Association (WTA) is calling upon the fish farm industry and government to take action now in order to save the 2009 outrun. They are seeking immediate commitments to move farms off key salmon migratory routes and the investment in attainable closed containment technologies.

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**For further information please contact:**

**Brian Gunn**  
WTA President  
mbg@uniserve.com  
250 286 4080

**Dean Wyatt**  
dean@grizzlytours.com  
250 253 0353

**Craig Murray**  
craig@nimmobay.com  
250 956 4000

**Donna MacKay**  
mackaybd@telus.net  
250 956 9882

**Howard Pattinson**  
tiderip@telus.net  
250 339 5320