

Government officials promote “sustainable” aquaculture in Norway while wild salmon stocks crash at home

Where is Canada’s Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Gail Shea, at a time when one of Canada’s most important commercial runs of salmon is experiencing a catastrophic collapse? She is showcasing Canada’s aquaculture industry at the Aqua Nor international aquaculture trade show in Trondheim, Norway.

British Columbia’s Fraser River sockeye may be down to less than ten percent of the predicted return but this has not deterred Minister Shea from joining the Canadian delegation to promote an industry associated with the demise of wild salmon worldwide (Ford and Myers 2008).

Norwegian-owned companies control more than 90% of British Columbia’s salmon farming production and the Norwegian government is a major shareholder in these companies. Sea lice from salmon farms have been identified in the collapse of several salmon runs in B.C.’s Broughton Archipelago (Krkosek et al 2007) and preliminary research indicates the missing sockeye were also infected with sea lice as they passed salmon farms on their migration to sea. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Province have allowed numerous salmon farms to be sited directly on the Fraser River migration route.

“The weight of scientific evidence my colleagues and I have published in peer-reviewed journals shows that sea lice from open net-cage salmon farms are pushing wild salmon toward extinction,” said Alexandra Morton, director of the Salmon Coast Field Station. “These are the wild salmon that Minister Shea and her department are responsible for managing. Instead of denying that salmon farms are having an impact, let alone promoting salmon aquaculture abroad, action is needed immediately to reduce the impacts of open net-cage salmon farms.”

The dire need for these Norwegian-owned companies to adopt strict environmental standards to protect wild salmon populations has led the Pure Salmon Campaign to attend Aqua Nor. The Pure Salmon Campaign is a global project aimed at salmon being farmed safely and with minimal ecological damage. Over 50 Pure Salmon Campaign partners and global allies sent a letter to King Harald of Norway, who is officially opening the Aqua Nor trade show, asking him to help protect wild fish populations from Norwegian-owned salmon farms.

The Campaign also invited King Harald to a screening of Damien Gillis’ new documentary, “Dear Norway: Help Save Canada’s Wild Salmon”. The film features testimonials from local scientists, fishermen and First Nations about how Norwegian-owned companies continue to threaten wild salmon, thereby impacting the ecological, cultural and economic welfare of British Columbia.

When learning of Minister Shea’s presence at Aqua Nor despite the state of wild stocks at home, Don Staniford, Global Coordinator for the Pure Salmon Campaign commented, “The Canadian Fisheries Minister is behaving like Emperor Nero, fiddling while Rome burns. While the Canadian delegation at Aqua Nor appears hell-bent on promoting B.C.’s salmon farming industry as “sustainable”, 92% of which is already controlled by Norwegian companies, wild salmon are being sold down the Fraser River. Hopefully the King of Norway has it in his power to stop the killing of wild salmon by Norwegian companies operating open net-cages in B.C.”

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To watch "Dear Norway: Help Save Canada's Wild Salmon" - <http://www.puresalmon.org/video2.html>.

To read the Pure Salmon Campaign's press release "Pure Salmon Campaign Urges King of Norway to Protect Canada's Wild Salmon" - <http://huffstrategy.com/MediaManager/release/Pure-Salmon-Campaign/17-8-09/Open-letter-to-King-of-Norway-to-stop-the-killing-of-wild-fish-by/1680.html>

To read the letter sent to King Harald, - http://www.puresalmon.org/pdfs/king_norway_letter.pdf.

To see the petition to Gail Shea to apply *The Fisheries Act* to fish farms (now signed by 16,000) - http://www.adopt-a-fry.org/?page_id=42

To read more about Aqua Nor (August 18 to 21) - http://nor-fishing.no/index.php?page=aqua-nor&hl=en_US.