



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sea Shepherd Canada issues statement of support for Ahousaht salmon farm blockade near Tofino British Columbia

Calls on government to revoke permits for Yaakswiis site, rallies today in Vancouver

18 September 2015, Vancouver, BC – Sea Shepherd Canada has issued a statement expressing its full support for the Yaakswiis Ocean Camp, now entering its tenth day occupying a salmon feedlot in Ahousaht First Nation territory in Clayoquot Sound.

The direct action ocean conservation organization is calling upon the federal and provincial governments to revoke all permits for the site, in absence of the consent of the Ahousaht people. Sea Shepherd supporters will be among those in attendance in Vancouver today at a public rally in support of the Yaakswiis occupation.

The rally, “Say NO to Fish Farms and YES to Indigenous Sovereignty” will take place at Main Street and Terminal Avenue today, Friday, September 18, at 4 pm.

The Yaakswiis salmon feedlot site (located approximately 25 km north-northwest of Tofino) is one of four new tenures announced on July 31, 2015 by the BC government, marking the largest expansion of the industry in over a decade. The structure was taken over by members of the Ahousaht First Nation last week as crews from foreign-owned salmon farming giant Cermaq were attempting to anchor the site.

Although a protocol agreement exists between Cermaq and the Ahousaht, the feedlot was installed without the consent of the Ahousaht people and the members of the Yaakswiis Ocean Camp have declared it illegal.

“Without consent from the people of the Ahousaht First Nation, this salmon farm must be removed,” said Sea Shepherd Canada director and veteran crew member, Rod Marining. “The Ahousaht people, like many other coastal First Nations in British Columbia, were promised jobs and prosperity by the salmon farmers. Instead, they have seen just a handful of jobs and watched as wild salmon runs that have sustained their people for generations continue to decline.”

Evidence continues to accumulate showing salmon farms and wild salmon cannot co-exist in the same waters. The problems with salmon farming are well documented and include the transmission of disease and viruses to wild salmon, sea lice infestations and exposure to salmon farm waste laden with pesticides and antibiotics, among other issues.

“While wild salmon are increasingly struggling to deal with the affects of warming oceans due to climate change, we cannot afford to continue to compound that risk by forcing them to swim through toxic salmon farm waste and expose them to disease,” said Marining. “It’s a recipe for disaster.”

The Ahousaht action is a wake up call to all British Columbians that we risk losing our most precious resource, one of the foundations of West Coast culture and a species that underpins our entire coastal ecosystem.

“The stakes are enormous. Fundamentally, the Ahousaht are fighting to defend their indigenous rights and food security, but in defending wild salmon, every British Columbian owes them real a debt of gratitude.”

Cermaq currently holds licenses on 16 other salmon farms in Ahousaht territory.

The full text of the Sea Shepherd Canada statement is below:

Sea Shepherd Canada stands in solidarity with the ocean defenders occupying the Yaakswiis salmon farm in Ahousaht First Nation territory in Clayoquot Sound.

Out of respect for the wishes of, and in recognition of the constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights and title of the Ahousaht people, we call upon the Federal and Provincial governments to:

- Immediately revoke any and all permits for the Yaakswiis site; and
- Institute a moratorium on any and all new fish farms, fish farm expansion and relocations in all of Ahousaht territory.

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About Sea Shepherd Canada

Founded in 1977 in Vancouver, BC by Captain Paul Watson, Sea Shepherd is an international non-profit, marine wildlife conservation organization. Our mission is to end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife in the world's oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species.

Sea Shepherd uses innovative direct-action tactics to investigate, document, and take action when necessary to expose and confront illegal activities on the high seas. By safeguarding the biodiversity of our delicately balanced ocean ecosystems, Sea Shepherd works to ensure their survival for future generations. Sea Shepherd Canada is the Canadian arm of Sea Shepherd, based in Vancouver, BC. For more information, visit: <http://www.seashepherdglobal.org>.