



Media Release

There is hope for Canada's Wild Salmon – a stunning move by Prime Minister Harper

(Sointula, British Columbia, November 5, 2009) After months of silence from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced today a Judicial Inquiry into how DFO is managing the Fraser River sockeye.

“Prime Minister Harper’s action is a significant step that could ensure wild salmon have a future,” says biologist Alexandra Morton, “there is clearly something very wrong with DFO and it would appear Mr. Harper understands the gravity of the situation. This action makes me cautiously optimistic and hopeful that we are poised at the beginning of a new era of fisheries management, benefiting all Canadians.”

The 2009 Fraser River sockeye collapse pattern is remarkably specific with some stocks returning at 4 times the DFO forecast and others failing by over 90%.

“When an animal demonstrates a pattern this bold (the fish migrating north disappeared, while the fish moving south flourished), it is possible to decipher the cause. However, DFO has thwarted progress with a torrent of highly contradictory and confusing misinformation,” says Morton.

“Today, Prime Minister Harper has done exactly what Canada needs if we want the security and benefits of wild fish stocks,” Morton continued. “Our sockeye are at the moment of no return. If there had been a Judicial Inquiry into DFO’s management of our North Atlantic cod stocks, certain DFO scientists would have been allowed to speak earlier and we would still have those fish stocks.”

The purpose of a Judicial Inquiry is to reveal the facts and then make recommendations to government. It is run by a judge and testimony is given under oath.

“Increasingly, leading fisheries scientists are suggesting DFO is corrupt and lying,” says Morton. “The agency is nonfunctional, having allowed policy to override biology, carelessly risking one of earth’s greatest fish stocks. The department is full of excellent scientists and enforcement officers who are not allowed to do their jobs.

This Inquiry will have to examine what we know about the Fraser sockeye from the spawning grounds to the open ocean. It will have to examine DFO’s relationship with science and review the agency’s performance in adapting effectively to new information. This is good for BC and Canada. Anyone who fears this process likely knows they are part of the problem. Wild salmon are not just a pretty fish, they are food, a climate stabilization mechanism, an economic powerhouse, and a national treasure. They belong to us. I am hopeful for the first time in a long time.”

This important action by the Prime Minister is deserving of applause. Thank you to all the hundreds of people who contacted their MPs about this Judicial Inquiry.

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