



**Media Release**  
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### **Salmon Conservationists Commend Justice Cohen on his Final Report—But Will Government Listen?**

Today, the much-anticipated Final Report of the *Cohen Inquiry* was made public. The 1,100 page Report was released almost three years after Prime Minister Harper announced Justice Bruce Cohen's mandate to investigate and provide recommendations for improving the sustainability of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River, including any changes to the operations of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

The Final Report was made available in a lock-up room to a select group of Inquiry participants, including Watershed Watch Salmon Society staff. A press conference was held by Justice Bruce Cohen immediately following the lock-up.

The initial reaction from Watershed Watch is that the Cohen Report includes some strong conclusions and recommendations that will benefit the recovery and future sustainability of salmon populations.

Dr. Craig Orr, Executive Director of Watershed Watch, commended Justice Cohen for the recommendations around DFO's confusion around its primary mandate—the conservation of wild fish; implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy; and the risks posed by pathogen and disease from open net-pen fish farms.

He stated, "It was very heartening to hear that one of Justice Cohen's prime recommendations was the full implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy and the Habitat Protection Policy, which includes ensuring that there are full resources for those policies."

Stan Proboszcz, Watershed Watch's Fisheries Biologist who participated in the full Inquiry, has initial concerns around issues in Justice Cohen's Report. This includes the omission of recommendations around open net-pen salmon farms outside the Discovery Islands area and that there are no recommendations regarding transitioning open net-pen farms to closed containment.

He stated, "Since the evidentiary hearings ended, new pathogen results suggest elevated risks to wild salmon and these pathogens may be linked to open net-pen farms. This risk would be mitigated by immediately removing the farms from the migration routes of wild salmon."

The true test of the success of the Cohen Inquiry will be if the recommendations are implemented quickly by all levels of government.

As also identified by Justice Cohen, recent government actions suggest a lack of interest in salmon protection and the results of their own \$26 million Inquiry into the decline of wild salmon. Reasons for concern include the weakening of environmental legislation—including the Fisheries Act—and granting of a new open net-pen salmon farm licence in Clayoquot Sound, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

It would be ironic and a great tragedy if the Cohen recommendations go the route of being delayed and underfunded like the Wild Salmon Policy which Justice Cohen's recommendations recognize as essential to ensuring sustainability of salmon for future generations.

***To arrange an interview please contact:***

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***During Inquiry hearings on disease and aquaculture, WWSS and SOS worked together to inform the public on key pieces of evidence.***

***For relevant documents see the “Cohen Report Tracker” <http://www.watershed-watch.org/cohen-report-tracker/>. Includes the WWSS “Synopsis of Key Evidence from the Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Fraser River Sockeye”.***

***Watershed Watch Salmon Society (WWSS) has been watching out for B.C.’s wild salmon since 1998. Our focus is to elevate the dialogue surrounding wild salmon and to improve our chances of saving them. Watershed Watch believes that real changes in attitude and behaviour are based on understanding, and that significant understanding requires a broad and deep appreciation of a wide range of habitat, harvest, and management issues. [www.watershed-watch.org](http://www.watershed-watch.org)***

***The SOS Marine Conservation Foundation (SOS) is a group of successful business leaders, entrepreneurs and philanthropists brought together to protect B.C.’s wild salmon stocks and the marine environment from negative impacts of open net-cage salmon farms and establish B.C. as a leader in creating a globally renowned, stable and viable aquaculture industry. [www.saveoursalmon.ca](http://www.saveoursalmon.ca)***