



Pacific Coast
Wild Salmon
Society

Stephen Harper makes wild salmon a BC election issue

Social media gaffe suggests government priority is farmed, not wild salmon, says biologist

Sointula, 24 Aug 2015 – Stephen Harper's recent announcement of \$15 million for wild salmon habitat restoration was met with ridicule on social media after a facebook gaffe highlighted Harper's disastrous record on wild salmon.

A post to Harper's facebook site featuring the Conservative party logo to promote the campaign initiative erred in one critical detail: they used the wrong fish, an Atlantic salmon, the fish of choice of the controversial salmon farming industry in BC.

"Perhaps if Harper hadn't fired or muzzled all of his scientists, they could have helped him get this right," said biologist Alexandra Morton. "This government has shown time and time again that it places higher priority on the foreign-owned Atlantic feedlots more than our precious wild salmon," said Morton, "in fact they are shameless about it."

As evidence, Morton points to the Harper government's decision to join with Norwegian-based salmon farming giant Marine Harvest to appeal her recent Federal Court decision (Morton vs. Marine Harvest) prohibiting transfer of diseased-carrying farmed salmon into BC marine waters.

"With rivers warming, our wild salmon are more vulnerable than ever to disease," says Morton. "Why on earth would a government go to court to expose them to more disease? I can only assume Canada has given up on its wild fisheries in favour of the foreign-owned salmon farming industry and that poster says it all."

While a photo of a Pacific salmon has now replaced the salmon photo in question, the gaffe places the BC Atlantic salmon farming industry in the election crosshairs. There have been over 700 shares of the image on Morton's public profile facebook page where it has reached 57,000 people.

The salmon farmers using BC waters have received a number of exceptional gifts from the Harper government this year. Minister of Fisheries, Gail Shea, enacted new regulations allowing them to use pesticides previously banned under the *Fisheries Act*, due to their potential to kill wild fish. The industry was offered much longer licenses – up to 9 years and the scandal-ridden Senate recommended that aquaculture double in size in Canada. In late July, the Provincial government followed Harper's lead, granting 4 new farm sites, the largest expansion of the industry in over 15 years ignoring a petition of over 110,000 signatures calling for no expansion.

“What Harper got right is that British Columbians care a lot about wild salmon,” says Morton, “I look forward to the other parties getting over their fear of offending the salmon farming industry and standing up for what British Columbians want.”

According to Harper’s \$37 million Cohen Commission which dedicated 11/75 recommendations to salmon farms, where spread of disease is the issue getting salmon farms off wild salmon migration routes may be the single greatest benefit any government could offer British Columbia’s wild salmon. All indications suggest the Fraser sockeye maybe in trouble again this year, while once again sockeye stocks not exposed to salmon farms are thriving (Port Alberni).

In 2014, wild salmon, through both commercial and recreational fisheries, contributed over 9,800 jobs and \$334.8 million to the provincial economy. In contrast, salmon farming contributed only about 1,700 jobs and \$58.5 million to BC GDP the same year.

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Please also visit [Alex's Facebook Page](#) for more information.