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Save Our Salmon (S.O.S.) Initiative Information Luncheon

By Dorothy Nelson

Two invitational luncheon/information sessions in April and May attracted a good representation of Nature Vancouver members to the Vancouver Aquarium. We who attended on May 14 were horrified to hear the scientific evidence of the observers in the field now speaking to us on the tragic plight of wild salmon in B.C. From Chief Bob Chamberlin of the Kwicksutaineuk\Ah-Kwa-Mish First Nation, we also heard of those people whose lives are immediately affected by the loss. And, of course, all of us are ultimately affected by the willful destruction of natural resources. As we know, open net-cage aquaculture has the potential, increasingly as it is allowed to expand in coastal waters, to wipe out wild salmon stocks because the small fry are unavoidably attacked by sea lice as well as by the fallout of antibiotic-infused effluent. To quote Dr. Craig Orr of Watershed Watch Conservation Society, who also spoke,

The weight of evidence...never rests in its quest to overrun the fortresses of denial and inaction. The only question that remains is: How many more wild salmon will be sacrificed before we dig ourselves out of this mess?

The founder of the **SOS Marine Conservation Foundation** and the main speaker at the **Save Our Salmon Initiative** was Eric Hobson, a Calgarian and sports fisherman deeply concerned by the evidence of sea lice infestation and resulting devastation of juvenile wild salmon. In a March meeting, Eric, with the assistance of program director Catherine Emrick and biologist and marine educator Jackie Hildering, presented an SOS solutions document to Ron Cantelon, Minister of Agriculture and Lands. More meetings are planned, moving towards the resolution or mitigation of problems associated with open net-cage salmon farms which already number 130 in B.C.'s protected inlets as far north as Klemtu .

With Alexandra Morton's successful challenge to the B.C. Supreme Court, which ruled last February that the British Columbia government does not have jurisdiction over the regulation of salmon farming, we can be hopeful that the recent government-

commissioned report of the Pacific Salmon Forum will swing the trend away from open net-cage to closed containment technology. To help make this a reality, the Save Our Salmon Initiative is working to develop two closed containment projects to be located in Klemtu and Beaver Cove. Chief Bob Chamberlin has also brought a class action law suit against the B.C. government on behalf of Nations of the Broughton Archipelago to correct the failure of regulation and monitoring by the government. It was a shock to discover that 90% of “farmed fish” operations in B.C. are owned, maintained and marketed by Norwegian interests.

Science continues to confirm the devastating impacts of open net-cage salmon farming to B.C.’s wild salmon and the ecosystem for which they are a keystone species. Recent developments, including the efforts of those involved in the Save Our Salmon Initiative, could move salmon farming towards both environmental and economic sustainability. For more information and to help, please see the website www.saveoursalmon.ca.