



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Regional Chief Teegee and Regional Chief Augustine Disappointed by DFO's Announcement Regarding Cohen Recommendation 19

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – September 29, 2020) – Regional Chief Terry Teegee (BC) and Regional Chief Roger Augustine (PEI/NB) are extremely frustrated by Department of Fisheries Ocean's (DFO) announcement on September 28th, 2020 regarding the implementation of recommendation 19 from the Cohen Commission:

"On September 30, 2020, the minister of fisheries and oceans should prohibit net-pen salmon farming in the Discovery Islands (fish health sub-zone 3-2) unless he or she is satisfied that such farms pose at most a minimal risk of serious harm to the health of migrating Fraser River sockeye salmon."

Despite evidence submitted to DFO by independent biologists, First Nations in the Discovery Islands and along the Fraser River that sea lice from fish farms are harming the vitality of wild salmon, the Minister has concluded that the open-net pen salmon farms in the Discovery Islands pose a minimal risk to Fraser River sockeye salmon. DFO conducted 9 risk assessments on various pathogens and diseases that are found on fish farms; however, sea lice are a parasite that were not included in the development of these assessments, nor were First Nations meaningfully engaged with when determining acceptable levels of risk of the other pathogens to wild salmon. Wild salmon runs in the Fraser River have been suffering exponentially each year. The Cohen Report was submitted to the DFO in October of 2012; demonstrating that the department has failed to effectively mitigate an area of concern in regard to wild salmon health for the last 8 years. Instead of removing the open-net pen fish farms from the Discovery Islands, DFO has committed to "consulting" with the 7 First Nations in the area.

"Wild salmon are crucial to the wellbeing and livelihoods of First Nations people in BC and nations have been blowing the whistle on the effects of open-net pen fish farming on wild salmon for well more than a decade," stated Regional Chief Teegee. "We have an inherent, constitutionally protected and Supreme court affirmed right to food, social and ceremonial fishing. We cannot exercise this right if there are no wild salmon to fish."

Regional Chief Augustine stated, "DFO needs to take immediate action to transition open-net pen fish farming to closed-containment aquaculture on the land. Indigenous peoples across the world sustained productive ecosystems for millennia prior to contact and traditional knowledge needs to be incorporated into management practices. "Consultation" does not imply decision-making influence. DFO needs to do better to protect First Nations rights to fish."

#honouringourancestors



Regional Chief Teegee is the Pacific lead for the AFN National Fisheries Committee, which is co-chaired by Regional Chief Roger Augustine (New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island).

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The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nation citizens in Canada. Follow AFN on Twitter @AFN_Updates.

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