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Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2004 9:59 AM
To: Saunders, Mark <SaundersM@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca>
Cc: Farlinger, Susan <FarlingerS@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca>
Subject: Aquaculture Development

Mark; We have spoken about the need to have a reference to Aquaculture Development in the WSP, and the general consensus seems to be that it is best placed as part of Objective number 2 - Habitat and Ecosystem Integrity. It is not yet clear to me exactly where it will fit in that general section, but I am hopeful that the choice can be easier made once we have a draft text. I have drafted something that I hope will be useful in deciding what we need to say about aquaculture, and where to stick it. I am circulating the following proposal to you and Ms. Farlinger for comment.

AQUACULTURE

Over the past decade, the development of salmon aquaculture in BC has expanded X fold, and the production of farmed fish now exceeds production from wild fisheries. Development of this new industry has provided needed income and employment in coastal communities where alternative economic opportunities are often limited. This expansion has not been without controversy. It has been accompanied by fierce public debate focussed on the sustainability of aquaculture operations, and the potential for adverse impact on the marine environment and wild salmon. Opponents of aquaculture development express concerns about escapes of farmed fish, and potential for adverse genetic effects. They cite habitat destruction problems, transference of disease from farms to wild populations and threats from increasing incidence of sea lice near farm pens, all of which represent risks to the well being of wild salmon. On the other side of the debate, proponents of aquaculture highlight steps taken to minimize the risks to wild stocks, such as siting restrictions, measures to prevent escapes, and the requirement for disease protocols for each farm sire to minimize the likelihood of disease outbreaks. They also point to the lack of demonstrated evidence of significant adverse effects on wild salmon from aquaculture to date.

As lead Federal agency for aquaculture development, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is directly in the middle of this debate. The Department must serve as both the regulator of aquaculture to avoid the potential for adverse effects on wild salmon, and as the agency responsible for its development. The policy and program guidance for reconciling these two roles is specified in the Departments Aquaculture Policy Framework. The goal is to manage aquaculture to ensure that that it is socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. This means that DFO will support aquaculture development consistent with its commitments to ecosystem based and integrated management, as set out in legislation, regulations and policies. Accordingly, the goals, principles, and objectives of the Wild Salmon Policy will guide the regulatory actions of the department, particularly with respect to site screening under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and fish transfer licensing under section 56 of the Fisheries Act, as they pertain to aquaculture. If specific Conservation Units of wild salmon are threatened by aquaculture operations, corrective actions will be taken and enforced using these regulatory tools.

Mark and Sue; I would be grateful for any comments on the content of this piece, and your thoughts on best placement in the document.

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