

The experience that I bring to my comments is obtained from a wide variety of marine activities. These range from BC coastal cruising to offshore sailor; Coast Guard radio operator to owner of a cash-buying fish packer. My offshore travels have made me realize and appreciate the unique value of our coastal waterways and the importance of protecting its integrity and its ability to create marine life. I ran a dive charter boat business and also established a wildlife tour and local water taxi company in Sidney. My varied marine experience enabled me to obtain a 350 ton masters certification. My comments are based on marine observations and experiences accumulated over many years.

Common sense tells me that when an executive of the salmon farming industry admits that salmon farms should not be located where wild salmon still thrive, we should listen. A plausible explanation for the success of this years' runs compared to last years (other than the fact that they are different rivers with different histories) could very well be that the migrating fry went south to the open ocean instead of north, past the aquaculture gauntlet. Common sense also tells me that when salmon feedlot operators refuse to release disease information, there is something to hide. Common sense says that we should not interfere with the life cycle of the salmon and threaten the loss of all that depends on this sacred fish. Why are we playing this fishy game of Russian roulette, gambling with our salmon while our future is at stake and the odds are loaded against us?

The fishermen and the fish were in better balance when the boats were small and the resulting catch per boat was limited by its size. Each ton of fish employed much more than the fishermen; it supported all of the peripheral marine activities in this endless quest for the fish. It is not so much the decline of the fish that has brought economic ruin to the fishing communities. It is the decline in the numbers of small vessels that were needed to ply their trade. Servicing and supplying small vessels employs thousands of BC residents. It was a working system of interdependence with marine suppliers and boat builders that brought prosperity to the entire community.

The introduction of seine fishing techniques vastly reduced the number of people supported per ton of fish. Eventually the large seine boats displaced hundreds of jobs and the profits were returned mostly to the large corporations. Some still went to the few crew members lucky enough to be aboard but less and less was spread to the local communities.

Finally, the introduction of the industrial salmon feedlots as a false economic solution to fish employment has further reduced the number of people supported per ton of fish. By flooding the market with an inferior product marketed in competition with the wild salmon, the prices remain too low to support a fisherman, his boat, his family and his community. Salmon should be recognized as the luxury table fish that it is and not to be regarded as a staple food. It is not sustainable as a staple food in a shrinking world. A farmed fish feeds only wealthy people and corporate dividends. A wild fish feeds the whales, the bears, the eagles, the economy and the ecosystem as well as people.

I have seen the aquaculture industry gradually gain possession of the prime locations in the north that sustain our wild salmon and that could permit future human settlements. These prime locations commandeer available water sources and obstruct marine safe havens for vessels. We are virtually giving away our land to these foreign corporations. We run the environmental risks in BC while the profits of the venture stimulate foreign economies elsewhere. This was a mistake made over thirty years ago and must be corrected if either the salmon or the economy are to survive. The open net pen salmon feedlots, in my opinion, are hastening the day when salmon will become extinct in BC due to feed and disease issues.

There are better choices to be made to promote both fish health and human growth in the north instead of leaving an industrial wasteland for future generations. The ability to sustain marine life on our coast will only support its future inhabitants if managed for the better good of the people, not for the good of big business monopolies. This is supposed to be the mandate of our government and is time to make it so. BC needs to preserve its own waterways, its fish and its communities; not continue to pay the dividends for large corporations, dividends obtained at BC's expense.

The astounding returns of this years sockeye run is nature's own contribution to this discussion; proving beyond doubt that DFO simply does not understand what it is trying to manage! How can these government Ministries then claim to know the negative impacts of salmon feedlots well enough to run the risks involved? Most importantly, the large returns from this years salmon runs has proven that our oceans are still capable of producing healthy wild salmon if human interference can be minimized. It has also shown the extent of the supporting infrastructure that has collapsed along with the jobs of the fishermen.

My vision for the future of BC's waterways and the health of BC's fisheries consists of a simple concept, a return to fisheries policies that support smaller boats sustaining more people. Retain smaller vessels with limited tonnage. This would result in more people involved in the process, therefore more people that could be supported per ton of fish. The peripheral activities that our wild salmon help to create are a huge economic factor in BC. Jobs in the tourism, sport fishing, boat building, recreational and charter companies all depend upon our fish and our waterways being available to us. If our wild salmon collapse, most marine-related jobs would collapse with them, rendering the north truly devoid of people.

Land based aquaculture has successfully provided humanity with fish protein for centuries. This form of aquaculture is more sustainable and better accepted, but becomes more expensive for the corporations to operate, so they continue to protest while they continue to threaten the waters they inhabit. The dividends belong to their shareholders and are clearly their business priority. The consequences of their actions belong to the people of BC. A wild fish returns much more to BC's economy and should not be placed in danger. A farmed fish on land provides jobs and world fish protein in a much more sustainable, controllable and acceptable way. These are the Aquaculture Regulations that we need and want.

It is more important to have the fish, the people, the whales, the boats and the communities than it is to feed cheap table fish to wealthy people. Offer crown land for shore-based homesteads now that internet jobs are viable.

Being at sea is inherently dangerous for both man and fish. It always has been. DFOs' mandate is the protection of our wild fish and our oceans. Are they really protecting our wild fish by risking fatal fish diseases in wild migratory paths and permitting pollution in conservation areas? That is not their mandate. Why are we even dealing with foreign corporations that have demonstrated their irresponsible lack of concern for the ocean environment in other parts of the world? Transport Canada is responsible for the protection of marine safety, yet our navigational safety is being compromised by filling our anchorages with aquaculture obstructions and dangerous hazards to navigation. This is contrary to Canadian marine laws. Whatever has happened to common sense, the protection of our ocean waters and observing the marine laws of Canada?