

News Release



For Immediate Release
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Salmon Forum finds management of BC waters must be shifted to an ecosystem basis to sustain both wild and farmed salmon

Vancouver, BC – Following four years of research and dialogue, the BC Pacific Salmon Forum today released its Final Report and Recommendations on what needs to be done to improve understanding of the economic, social and environmental sustainability of BC wild salmon stocks and salmon aquaculture on the coast. The Forum found wild salmon face unprecedented threats to both ocean and freshwater habitats due to climate change and watershed impacts as a result of human activity.

The Forum's report acknowledges concerns expressed about the impacts of salmon farming on wild salmon. The Forum believes that salmon farming and wild salmon can coexist only if farms are rigorously managed in accordance with its recommended ecosystem thresholds.

The 95-page report includes 16 recommendations for the provincial government over the next four years to help achieve the Premier's goal of having 'the best managed fisheries bar none'.

Forum Chair John Fraser said, "Although we recognize that the current economic downturn may require some flexibility in this timeframe, we are looking to the Government of British Columbia to enact the appropriate legislative and regulatory measures to ensure implementation of our recommendations."

Fraser noted that some initial steps have already been announced by the Province, such as *Living Water Smart BC*, the government's plan that identifies actions to help to keep the watersheds healthy.

The Forum's report says the current system of watershed governance is inadequate to address the complexity of today's resource decisions and changes in climate over the coming decades. It recommends that watersheds and marine environments be managed holistically as ecosystems supported by indicators to gauge their health and ensure that water and land decisions are made within ecosystem capacities.

The BC Pacific Salmon Forum is an initiative of the Government of BC announced by Premier Campbell in December 2004, with the mandate of providing the direction required to enable the Province to realize the vision to sustain viable wild and farmed salmon sectors.

Under the leadership of the Chair, Honourable John Fraser, the Forum members include six appointed members from a variety of backgrounds who are well informed about fisheries issues. The Forum was assisted by the guidance of an independent multi-disciplinary Science Advisory Committee.

For more information on the Final Report and Recommendations see the attached backgrounder and to view the final report visit www.pacificsalmonforum.ca.

MEDIA

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SUMMARY OF BC PACIFIC SALMON FORUM FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS:



An ecosystem-based approach will require a change in governance including:

- A restructuring of Provincial management of coastal waters and watersheds beginning with creation of a single Water and Land Agency to oversee all development and resource industry decisions in BC watersheds to safeguard ecological health
- Creation of a new Regulatory Oversight Authority to audit the province's regulatory processes to provide public confidence that decisions that affect watersheds are being made in accordance with ecosystem-based indicators and report its findings to the public
- Creation of a Science Secretariat to manage future research required to support salmon sustainability
- Increased collaboration between all levels of government – federal, provincial, First Nations, and local - in the governance of watershed.

Key recommendations in managing salmon farming:

- Establishment of sea lice levels on wild fish based on natural background conditions to ensure wild salmon populations are not impacted by fish farms
- An annual limit of 18,500 tonnes of total farmed salmon production in the Broughton Archipelago as a precautionary approach with similar limits on annual production in all other salmon farming areas while the Province works with industry to implement an ecosystem-based approach to management of aquaculture. These precautionary limits could be adjusted if it is demonstrated that ecosystem-based environmental thresholds are being met.
- Encouragement of technical innovation in salmon farming to reduce its ecological impact, including polyculture (growing of finfish, shellfish and marine plants together) and a commercial-scale pilot project to test closed containment salmon farming
- The Forum and its Science Advisory Committee are also supporting a proposal, endorsed by the companies operating fish farms in the Broughton, to implement and evaluate a coordinated area management plan (CAMP) to test the effectiveness of annually providing a migratory route free of farm-generated lice for out-migrating wild salmon smolts.