

FISH FARMS. BC. CANADA Political Communication. Alexandra Morton

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From: **Alexandra Morton** <wildorca@island.net>
Date: Wed, Jun 17, 2009 at 8:16 AM
Subject: [fishermenlist] The Minister Answers Us, But...
To: Alexandra Morton <wildorca@island.net>
Cc: "fishfarmrev@lists.onenw.org" <fishfarmrev@lists.onenw.org>

Hello All,

Fisheries Minister the Honourable Gail Shea finally answered us. Please go to www.adopt-a-fry.org "The Letter" to see her response. Here is my answer.

Also go to www.farmedanddangerous.org to see that large environmental groups in BC are calling for immediate closure of salmon farms on the crucial Fraser River migration route.

June 16, 2009

The Honourable Gail Shea
House of Commons
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Parliament Buildings, Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Shea:

Thank you for your response to my letters asking that the *Fisheries Act* be applied to fish farms, signed by 14,000 people.

It is clear I have failed to communicate the scope of the problems we, on the coast of British Columbia, are facing with the fish farming industry. Your reply does not address the relentless state of conflict between fish farmers and many businesses and communities, as a result of the salmon farms being placed on the migration routes of BC's most valuable wild salmon stocks. Whatever else has harmed, or still is harming wild salmon it is certain that the annual sea lice epidemics, associated with salmon farms worldwide, are contributing substantively to the negative impacts on an extremely valuable public resource. The people of BC are being asked to accept reduced opportunities on our wild salmon, simply to accommodate a fish farm industry that refuses to pay the additional cost of building walls around their livestock.

It seems unrealistic for you to write that aquaculture operations are subject to the *Fisheries Act* when:

1. They have unlicensed packers moving fish over Canadian waters

2. They use grow lights strictly prohibited by the *Fisheries Act* that are attracting wild fish into pens of 100,000's carnivorous fish.
3. There are no records on fish farm by-catch of highly valuable Pacific species such as herring, juvenile salmon, black cod, etc.
4. Fish farmers widely use a drug that is not approved for use in Canadian waters and they never post warnings that could protect the public from this toxic drug.
5. Salmon farming appears unconstitutional in Canada as it:
 1. privatizes ocean spaces
 2. believes it owns schools of salmon in Canadian marine waters.

Then there are the enormous issues of "release of deleterious substances" and habitat alteration.

Can you explain what you mean by "the Province will continue in the role it has been assuming to this day in managing aquaculture within the province". How long will they "continue"? The Province has no mandate to protect wild fish and it is unconstitutional as per the Supreme Court of BC for the Province to regulate salmon farming after February 2010.

From my perspective, it is Provincial regulation that got us into this mess simply because they have no legal mandate to protect wild fish in the ocean. The result of this regulatory mismatch is the Province can do their job of regulating the "farm" component of fish farming while largely ignoring the ocean component where we all know the "farm" effluent, including parasites, viruses, bacteria, escaped Atlantic salmon and drugs go. I know the Province does check some ocean parameters outside the pens, but not outside the leases and that is where all conflicts with the public resource exist.

I think it is time to reevaluate where we are at with this issue. No responsible person can look at salmon farming from a global perspective and say there are no problems. You cannot say the problems have been resolved, nor can anyone say farm fish benefit the public more than wild fish and should thus receive the preferential treatment that they do. You cannot even say they are going to feed the world as they catch fish to feed to their fish. As I write, a neighbor watched young wild Broughton pink salmon spilling onto a road as farm fish were transferred out of boat into a truck. What right do fish farmers have to possess wild juvenile salmon in their pens, boats and trucks? How many herring, salmon and black cod are destroyed in this manner?

Minister Shea, there is something very wrong with the way salmon farming is being handled in BC. In the past, DFO ignored disastrous impact on an extremely valuable fishery and that management regime continues to cause economic hardship in east coast towns, as well as, depriving the world of a large food resource. I would argue the same management regime is well underway in British Columbia affecting wild salmon, the BC economy and the eastern Pacific.

When I met with the executive officers of the largest fish farm companies Marine Harvest and

Mainstream, last month in Norway, I heard them say repeatedly that they would only adhere to the laws of each country, not bring their best practices with them from Norway. But what I see are the laws of Canada not even being enforced.

Minister Shea, you are faced with a clear legal decision. Either bring the fish farming industry into compliance with the laws of Canada or call on Parliament to change the laws to bring them into compliance with the fish farming industry. You cannot leave this in a state of perpetual lawlessness. When I began my work on juvenile salmon and did not realize I needed a permit, DFO investigated me and said if I ever retain juvenile salmon without a permit again I would go to jail. Since then I have made sure I have a permit to handle young salmon. I want to know what permit and legal possession limit you will be issuing to Marine Harvest and the others for possession of wild salmon, and other wild fish in their pens, boats, trucks and fish? You cannot know the scope of this problem without placing observers on fish farms and farm fish vessels as you do with commercial fishermen and this is one of the requests made by the 14,000 people who signed the letters to you.

Thank you again for your reply. I know this is a difficult issue that you have inherited. However, you accepted this role and now the ability of the eastern Pacific Ocean to support life and the BC economy rests with you.

Warmly,

Alexandra Morton