

## **BACKGROUND**

### **True Economic Costs of Open Net-Cage Salmon Farming**

One of the most consistent arguments made in favour of continuing the open net-cage salmon farming industry in BC is the value placed on the jobs it provides in coastal communities.

CAAR agrees that jobs and benefits to our communities are extremely important. It is essential that politicians and citizens also give serious consideration to the jobs that are put at risk by the salmon farming industry's current destructive practices. Jobs that vastly outnumber those generated by fish farming.

The weight of peer-reviewed scientific research confirms the serious risks posed to wild salmon and ocean ecosystem health by open net-cage salmon farming. Thousands of jobs depend on the health of our wild salmon and all the species the salmon support. From commercial fishing to wildlife tourism, countless people and communities rely on "Super Natural BC" to provide for their families and futures.

#### **True Costs: Jobs**

The BC Salmon Farmers Association web site claims that salmon farming supports 5,000 jobs in coastal BC communities. 1,800 are direct full time equivalent jobs, and 2,000 more are indirect. We assume the remaining 1,200 are calculated as induced jobs, employment supported by the spending of the direct and indirect workers.

However, a report commissioned by the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture concludes the Association's numbers are seriously off base. MMK Consulting Inc. investigated all jobs provided by salmon farming in BC and reports<sup>1</sup> the total of all direct, indirect and induced jobs is 2,945 – significantly lower than the industry has long claimed and much, much lower than the jobs generated by wild salmon and healthy, salmon-dependent ecosystems.

BC Statistics on-line, a BC government agency, reports a total of 14,300 jobs in the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.<sup>2</sup> That does not include processing jobs in fish plants, many of which are derived from the wild fishery.

#### **True Costs: Value of Wild Fish Marine Industries**

*Fishy Business*, a 2003 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, places the economic contribution of BC's sport and commercial fisheries at \$1 billion per year.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Eye Online, April 26, 2007

<sup>2</sup> BC Stats on line, 2002 (latest figures)



Tourism in BC is a huge contributor to the province's GDP with 2004 direct revenues of \$9.5 billion and 117,500 full time equivalent direct jobs.<sup>3</sup> "Characteristics of the Commercial Nature-based Tourism Industry in BC", a 2005 report commissioned by Tourism BC and the Wilderness Tourism Association, notes that nature-based tourism generated \$1.55 billion in revenue in 2001 and that BC's primary tourism product is nature – wildlife, fish and wilderness. The report also states that over 50 percent of nature-based tourism in the Province operates on Vancouver Island or the central coast and mountains tourism regions.

The foundation of life in these coastal temperate rainforest regions is the wild salmon. Healthy wild salmon runs feed the bears, eagles, orcas and even the old-growth riparian forests which derive the majority of the nitrogen fertilizing their growth from the carcasses of wild salmon. This same region, supporting over 50% of a billion-dollar plus tourism industry, is also home to all of BC's open net-cage fish farms - farms whose practices threaten the survival of the wild salmon.

### **Skeena Salmon: Risking a \$110 Million Dollar Industry**

Currently, the north coast of BC and the wild salmon-rich Skeena and Nass rivers are not plagued with salmon farms. Proposals exist to expand the fish farm industry into this region and have been met with staunch opposition from commercial and sport fishing businesses, lodge owners and the vast majority of First Nations and local residents.

A report commissioned by these concerned citizens from IBM Business Consulting in 2006<sup>4</sup> concluded the healthy wild salmon of the Skeena River watershed is worth \$110 million annually. Wild salmon support recreational tourism, sport and commercial fishing, value-added processing and provide value to BC First Nations and Alaskan citizens.

All told, the value to BC's coastal communities derived from wild salmon and healthy ecosystems far outweighs the minimal job benefits of the highly mechanized salmon farming industry putting wild salmon at risk.

By making the transition to closed, contained farm technology such as ocean-based floating tanks, BC could have it all. We could sustain jobs in the salmon farming industry and greatly reduce the threat to jobs dependent on healthy oceans and abundant wild salmon.

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<sup>3</sup> Securing a Land Base for Tourism. Wilderness Tourism Association, 2005

<sup>4</sup> The Valuation of the Wild Salmon Economy of the Skeena River Watershed. IBM Business Consulting, March, 2006