

PSF Perspective on DFO Decision to Phase Out Open-Net-Pen Salmon Farms in the Discovery Islands

The Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) commends Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the seven First Nations in the Discovery Islands for the consultations that led to the decision by DFO Minister Bernadette Jordan to phase out open-net-pen aquaculture in the Discovery Islands during the next 18 months. PSF acknowledges the work of the Homalco, Klahoose, K'ómoks, Kwaikah, Tla'amin, We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum First Nations in these consultations. In a letter to Minister Jordan earlier this month, PSF encouraged her to not renew aquaculture licenses in the Discovery Islands based on salmon health science and the serious conservation status of many wild Pacific salmon stocks that migrate through these waters.

PSF sees this decision as a consequential step forward for the recovery of wild Pacific salmon such as Fraser River Sockeye that are experiencing historic declines. We believe there has long been ample evidence to apply the “precautionary principle” for the conservation and restoration of wild Pacific salmon, which is DFO’s principle mandate. We hope that this very positive outcome in the Discovery Islands will accelerate the broader transition in British Columbia to closed containment salmon aquaculture. We recognize that the aquaculture industry can bring economic benefits to British Columbia, and we believe a transition to closed containment is the sustainable path forward.

During the last few years, the Governments of Canada and British Columbia have made the conservation and restoration of Pacific salmon a priority. Federally, there is a commitment to transition to closed containment by 2025. A very constructive step forward on this front is Minister Jordan’s appointment of Terry Beech, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister and Member of Parliament for Burnaby North – Seymour, to develop an interim report this spring to inform the transition to closed containment in British Columbia. Provincially, effective in June 2022, land tenure decisions about salmon aquaculture will be decided based on the health of salmon in consultation with First Nations. The Government of British Columbia has also worked with First Nations and the aquaculture industry to develop an orderly transition plan for open-net-pen aquaculture in the Broughton Archipelago. Together, the federal and provincial governments have also made significant new investments in wild Pacific salmon through the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund.

Much remains to be done. As we approach a new year, though, these decisions along with the dedication of countless people and organizations devoted to Pacific salmon give us reasons to be optimistic about the potential to restore and sustain our vital Pacific salmon.

Additional Resources:

[DFO Announcement](#)

[PSF Letter to DFO Minister Regarding Discovery Islands Salmon Farms](#)