



Newsletter

FALL 2022

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Ottawa is scaling back it's promise to phase out open net-pen salmon farms

BY ROCHELLE BAKER
Local Journalism Initiative
Sept. 17, 2022

Environmental groups worry Ottawa is backtracking on its commitment to phase out open net-pen salmon farming in B.C. waters after approving expansions to three operations off the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has permitted Cermaq Canada to significantly increase the volume of Atlantic salmon produced at three farm sites in Clayoquot Sound, said Bonny Glambeck, campaigns director for Clayoquot Action.

"We're very concerned (DFO) is going in absolutely the wrong direction," Glambeck said, adding the increased density of fish at the farms will only amplify existing risks to wild salmon from sea lice and disease.

Fisheries Minister Joyce Murray has a mandate to transition away from open net-pen salmon farms by 2025.

"We're shocked to see DFO has approved expanding open net-pens, the very technology it is promising to transition away from," Glambeck said.

"It sends a very bad signal to allow Cermaq to invest millions of dollars into open net-pen technology that we hope will be obsolete within the next two years.

Production volumes at Cermaq's Bawden Point and Millar Channel salmon farms will increase by 50 per cent and its Dixon Bay operation will jump by 25 per cent, she said.

The federal government is fully committed to developing a plan to transition away from open net-pen salmon aquaculture in B.C., said DFO in an emailed statement to Canada's National Observer.

"While Cermaq has requested amendments to three specific sites, the company's overall production limits in Northern Clayoquot Sound remain unchanged, and only four of the six farms in the area will be allowed to operate at any given time," the statement said.

Neither FO nor Murray's office clarified why the fish farm expansions were approved when the deadline for a transition away from open net-pens is expected within three years.

Glambeck was dubious DFO's immediate strategy would improve the risks facing wild salmon.

"Well, if they are growing more fish on any given site, they are going to be shedding more viral particles and more sea lice.

It's just that simple," she said.

"And so the fish from the rivers nearby that migrate past those farms are going to be faced with an increased load of dangerous viruses and pathogens and parasites."

Stan Proboszcz, senior scientist at Watershed Watch Salmon Society, also expressed concern about the optics of DFO intensifying production at any site given its stated mandate.

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EDITORIAL

Just how perilously close to the various predictions of environmental catastrophe we are, was driven home to us during a recent trip to northern B.C. and Alberta. With a stop at the Columbia icefields to view the glacier it was immediately apparent that they were in full out retreat. The distance from a marker indicating the boundary of the glacier in the early twentieth century is measured in kilometers from where the glacier is located today. It may be that in a few more years my, as yet, unborn great grandchildren will not have a glacier to view.

Similarly, on the return trip through the heart of B.C. construction on the federally owned oil pipeline meant that traffic was slowed. Ominously, the pipeline is being built not only on the side of the busy number five highway but also next to important waterways including the salmon bearing North Thompson and Raft rivers. While massive the pipeline will be open to all of the dangers that similar pipelines from below the forty-ninth parallel are subject to; earthquakes, terrorists and simple leaks. The risk to the land and water posed by an oil spill are incredible and yet the government continues to build.

On the dry hills above the pipeline were the remnants of past wildfires, which were considered uncommon when they occurred a few years ago. Today the loss of these trees, buildings, and equipment is known to have been just a first salvo in what has become a

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...*EDITORIAL continued*

more devastating annual occurrence up and down our province. Fire has been costly in money, resources, and lives, and should result in a different way in which to view our forests and the communities constructed near them.

Further down the road the CBC station provided us with news of the huge hurricane (Fiona) that had struck Canada's east coast playing havoc with buildings, trees, and people's lives. The flooding resulting from storm surges was devastating to more than one province. Of course, linked to this story was the one regarding the impending storm about to hit Florida and other southern states. We now know this hurricane as Ian and have witnessed the destruction left in its wake. While Ian has been described as 'a one in 500-year event' it is just the latest in destructive weather events that coincide with rising sea-levels and coastal community building.

While none of these occurrences, on their own, indicate human caused climate change, taken in conjunction with other evidence they provide a very good basis on which to construct such a conclusion. What the expert predictions have been foreshadowing is proving in many cases to be a best-case scenario. The current unseasonal autumn that the Okanagan and many parts of southern British Columbia is experiencing is nice for

a walk but is also leading to water shortages and a prolonged wildfire season.

As our climate changes and presents us with somewhat new but predictable consequences, we must learn how to stop, reverse, or at least mitigate them. To accomplish this, we must recognize the fallacies that we have been operating under. The very first step is to recognize that human beings are responsible for the changes, either directly or through disruptions to natural systems. The rise in global temperature has been directly linked to human activity. This temperature rise has occurred at the heart of many of the disruptions in systems and cycles that we see as severe weather, natural calamities, and species extinctions.

There are numerous examples of actions occurring internationally, nationally, provincially, and locally. To suggest one that occurs throughout B.C., even as this is written, when logging roads cross and deposit debris in salmon (or Kokanee) spawning streams, the resulting decline in fish stocks effect the biodiversity in huge areas of our province. The biodiversity of both flora and fauna are imperative for the wellbeing of nature. Similarly, clearcutting and replanting a single specie of tree does nothing for the regeneration of important carbon sinks and results in a forest similar to a depleted garden. Since they form a monoculture, the trees are susceptible to disease, fires, and blowdowns,

not to mention that they seldom provide the habitat for wild creatures that robust, diverse forests do.

There is currently a declared drought through much of the province including the Okanagan and the Similkameen. Water is scarce. In yet numerous community watersheds have been, and continue to be, subjected to fouling by logging activities, including road building, clearcutting, and inadequate waste and debris programs. Of course, the outcomes of this degradation includes land sluffs, flooded creeks and ponds, access for garbage dumpers, motorized recreation vehicles (like mud-boggers, and joyriders) and anyone else that wants to access critical habitat without effort. This in turn can lead fires, more trash, and pollution of the water intended to serve the community. Lest you think that this is not an Okanagan problem consider that Peachland now must install an expensive water system to 'produce' water for its citizens. Peachland is not the only community where such programs are required, often as the result of invaded and degraded watersheds.

Read the articles in this newsletter from the perspective of the pending, and in many cases the already here, climate change. We are not immune here in the southern interior and we need to take actions to, if not totally stop climate change outcomes, then to, at least, mitigate them. Nature will not wait for us.



Wildlife of all shapes, forms and species make up the biomes in which humans comfortably live. This includes creatures like this insect consuming spider. You might say that she is an important part of the web of life.



The British Columbia drought is upon us. We are implementing various strategies and rule to conserve water. In the meantime, local community watersheds are open to degradation by corporations and individuals.

Drax: UK power station owner cuts down primary forests in Canada

BBC PANORAMA

Drax, Britain's biggest power station, generates electricity by burning millions of tonnes of imported wood pellets. A company that has received billions of pounds in green energy subsidies from UK taxpayers is cutting down environmentally-important forests, a BBC Panorama investigation has found.

Drax runs Britain's biggest power station, which burns millions of tonnes of imported wood pellets — which is classed as renewable energy. The BBC has discovered some of the wood comes from primary forests in Canada. The company says it only uses sawdust and waste wood. Panorama analysed satellite images, traced logging licences and used drone filming to prove its findings. Reporter Joe Crowley also followed a truck from a Drax mill to verify it was picking up whole logs from an area of precious forest.

Ecologist Michelle Connolly told Panorama the company was destroying forests that had taken thousands of years to develop. "It's really a shame that British taxpayers are funding this destruction with their money. Logging natural forests and converting them into pellets to be burned for electricity, that is absolutely insane," she said.

The Drax power station in Yorkshire is a converted coal plant, which now produces 12% of the UK's renewable electricity. It has already received £6bn in green energy subsidies. Burning wood is considered green, but it is controversial among environmentalists.

Panorama discovered Drax bought logging licences to cut down two areas of environmentally-important forest in British Columbia. The Panorama team used drones to survey the area. One of the Drax forests is a square mile, including large areas that have been identified as rare, old-growth forest. The provincial government of British Columbia says old-growth forests are particularly important and that companies should put off logging them. Drax's own responsible sourcing policy says it "will avoid damage or disturbance" to primary and old-growth

forest. However, the latest satellite pictures show Drax is now cutting down the forest. The company told Panorama many of the trees there had died, and that logging would reduce the risk of wildfires. The entire area covered by the second Drax logging licence has already been cut down.

How green is burning wood? Burning wood produces more greenhouse gases than burning coal. The electricity is classed as renewable because new trees are planted to replace the old ones and these new trees should recapture the carbon emitted by burning wood pellets. But recapturing the carbon takes decades and the off-setting can only work if the pellets are made with wood from sustainable sources. Primary forests, which have never been logged before and store vast quantities of carbon, are not considered a sustainable source. It is highly unlikely that replanted trees will ever hold as much carbon as the old forest.

Drax told the BBC it had not cut down the forests itself and said it transferred the logging licences to other companies. But Panorama checked and the authorities in British Columbia confirmed that Drax still holds the licences. Drax said it did not use the logs from the two sites Panorama identified. It said they were sent to timber mills to make wood products — and that Drax only used the leftover sawdust for its pellets. The company says it does use some logs — in general — to make wood pellets. It claims

it only uses ones that are small, twisted, or rotten. But documents on a Canadian forestry database show that only 11% of the logs delivered to the two Drax plants in the past year were classified as the lowest quality, which cannot be used for wood products.

Panorama wanted to see if logs from primary forests cut down by logging companies were being transferred to Drax's Meadowbank pellet plant. The programme filmed a truck on a 120-mile round trip: leaving the plant, collecting piles of whole logs from the forest and then returning to the plant for their delivery. Drax later admitted that it did use logs from the forest to make wood pellets. The company said they were species the timber industry did not want, and they would often be burned anyway to reduce wildfire risks. The company also said the sites identified by Panorama were not primary forest because they were near roads. But the UN definitions of primary forest do not mention proximity to roads and one of the sites is six miles from the nearest paved road.

The UK government is due to publish a new biomass strategy later this year, which will set out its policy for natural fuels like wood. A Drax spokesperson said 80% of material in its Canadian pellets is sawmill residuals, which would be disposed of anyway. They also said that Drax applies stringent sustainability standards to its own pellet production as well as suppliers, with verification from third-party certification schemes. "We are constantly reviewing these policies to ensure we take account of the latest science," they added.

Panorama's *The Green Energy Scandal Exposed* is on BBC One at 20:00 on Monday 3rd October and on iPlayer afterward

Quoted

Ben Barclay, British Columbia Environmentalist

I wish they could be stopped from using the term "renewable energy" for burning anything.

The term is like "natural". Natural is undefined. Plutonium is "natural", but I wouldn't put it on my cereal in the morning.

Generating energy from burning things is suicide.

Lumping power plants in with wind turbines is deceptive.

The term "renewable" needs dropping. Wind and solar aren't "renewable", they are "non-combustion" energy.

Clearcutting isn't "renewable", because it degrades forests into plantations.

Like, granite is renewable, if you wait long enough.

The term is useless. I guess that's why the fuel industry loves it so much.

Settlement: Logging Causes Flooding

BRENNA OWEN
The Canadian Press

Lawyers for the British Columbia government have agreed to pay \$300,000 to settle a lawsuit by a couple whose property flooded after a third of the forest in the surrounding watershed was cut down. The agreement came in a handwritten note that was signed by the Crown's lawyers and handed over in court on the day the trial was set to begin last month. Ray Chipeniuk and Sonia Sawchuk had launched the lawsuit in 2014, claiming that BC Timber Sales, the provincial Crown agency responsible for auctioning about 20 per cent of B.C.'s annual allowable cut, was negligent in its failure to take reasonable care to ensure their property in northwestern B.C. would not be damaged by the logging.

It also alleged the agency committed the civil tort of nuisance by clearcutting the watershed to an "unreasonable extent," causing flooding and increased flows of water that would continue to affect the plaintiffs' enjoyment of their property, south of Smithers. The province's 2015 response to the civil claim denies negligence and denies that the province owed the couple a duty of care. It says BC Timber Sales engaged in a planning process "typical for forest operations" in B.C., including assessing conditions at the watershed and engaging a hydrologist to provide advice.

The couple's lawyer, Ian Lawson, said he had put forward an offer to settle for \$300,000. He said he was in B.C. Supreme Court in Smithers last month, waiting for the trial to begin, when Crown lawyers asked for a pause. They then gave him the handwritten note agreeing to the \$300,000 settlement, subject to final approval, "which counsel for the province undertakes to promptly pursue." Lawson described the last-minute decision as "rather dramatic." The Forests Ministry declined to comment, saying the matter has not been formally finalized. The Canadian Press has seen a copy of the offer signed by Crown lawyers.



Floodwaters cover Ray Chipeniuk's driveway near Smithers, B.C. in this 2018 handout photo. Lawyers for the British Columbia government have agreed to pay \$300,000 to settle a lawsuit by Chipeniuk and his wife whose property flooded after a third of the forest in the surrounding watershed was cut down. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO, Ray Chipeniuk *MANDATORY CREDIT*

Chipeniuk, a retired professor of environmental planning at the University of Northern B.C., said in an interview that he and his wife spent years searching for an ideal rural property with land as close as possible to its natural state. They purchased the 65-hectare property in 2004 and got to work expanding a network of forest trails and gardens to enjoy during their retirement. Chipeniuk said the landscape is now so saturated he can't use his tractor in parts of the property and lengthy stretches of trails are unusable for much of the year.

Chipeniuk said that for a year, he raised concerns with BC Timber Sales about the possibility that logging could affect downstream hydrology. But the cut block was auctioned, and 30 per cent of the watershed was logged in 2009. The property first flooded in 2012, then again in 2018. The first flood caused a landslide on the property, submerged the couple's driveway and resulted in the contamination of their well water with E. coli, the lawsuit states. The floods resulted in the combined loss of more than 160 trees, while reducing the property's value by an estimated \$236,000, according to the plaintiffs.

Chipeniuk said that in addition to the physical damage caused by the flooding, it had left him and his wife feeling what some psycholo-

gists call "ecological grief." "Just about every day," he said, they felt a twinge of depression stemming from the changes the logging and flooding had wrought on the landscape. He said that based on conversations with previous owners, the property had never had issues with oversaturation or flooding in the 30 years prior to the logging.

After filing their lawsuit, the couple hired Younes Alila, an expert in forest hydrology and professor in the department of forest resources management at the University of British Columbia, to provide evidence about what led to the flooding. Alila described the evidence that logging was the culprit as a "slam dunk." He prepared a 70-page report outlining his conclusion that the clearcutting had "supercharged" flows in the watershed, with snow and snowmelt the key factor. The fairly flat, three-square-kilometre watershed lies in the "rain shadow" of B.C.'s coastal mountains, making it a drier environment. Just over half the average annual precipitation of 500 millimetres falls in the form of snow, Alila said. "The flat topography in the snow environment is very responsive to floods," he said, with snow in a lower-elevation area melting all at once, and more quickly, than it would on a mountain with lower temperatures at higher altitudes.

The logging changed the composition of the forest, removing half the coniferous trees, another factor influencing snowmelt, Alila said in an interview. Conifers, which keep their greenery in winter, help collect snow before it reaches the ground and redirect some of that moisture back into the atmosphere through a process called sublimation. The evergreen trees also provide shade, slowing down snowmelt on a sunny day, he said. "When you remove the (coniferous) trees ... it eliminates both the interception of the snow and the shading of the snowpack. It increases the amount of snow accumulating in the cut block, and it increases the energy available for its melting." Prior to logging, two-thirds of the watershed was covered by coniferous trees, Alila said, while the rest were deciduous trees that lose their leaves in the winter.

Now, about one-third of the watershed has been logged, one-third is covered by deciduous trees and one-third by the remaining conifers, he said. Alila said the loss of half of the watershed's conifers effectively doubled the impact of the logging rate to 60 per cent in terms of its effect on snow, snowmelt and hydrology. "The melt used to be desynchronized between the deciduous and the coniferous trees," he said, meaning it used to happen at different rates and times. The synchronization of snowmelt induced by the logging amplified the magnitude, duration and the frequency of water flows, especially in the springtime, he said. It would take decades for the watershed's hydrology to recover from logging, Alila said, noting his analysis of forest hydrology research in dry, snowy environments uniformly suggested there is little to no recovery in the first 20 years after logging. Substantial recovery is expected only after 60 to 80 years have passed, he said.

The logging company that cut the trees, Triantha Enterprises Ltd., was also named as a defendant in Chipeniuk's lawsuit. The company agreed to an earlier settlement, the details of which are subject to a confidentiality agreement, Lawson said. A settlement isn't as powerful as a judgment, which could inform cases in the future, Lawson said, but he hoped it would encourage other property owners who may have experienced similar circumstances to explore their options.

This report by The Canadian Press was first published Oct. 8, 2022.

UBC's South OK field station gets \$2.4M upgrade

BY JOE FRIES
Okanagan Newspaper Group

A field station near Oliver that has been hosting geology students from the University of B.C. for the past 60 years has just received a \$2.4-million update that will help expand use of the facility for the study of other earth sciences.

Located at 1813 Willowbrook Rd. near the edge of the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area, the field station is meant to replicate the conditions under which students will eventually work in remote settings.

They're going out on day trips and observing rock formations and making notes of structures and mineral types and trying to reconstruct what they would call the tectonic history of the landscape, understanding what sort of geological processes gave rise to the formations and placements that are seen today," said Philippe Tortell, head of UBC's Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, in an interview.

Originally built in the 1960s, the newly updated facility, with sleeping quarters and dining room for upwards of 50 students and staff, has been renamed the UBC-Teck Geological Field Station in honour of the mining company's \$1-million donation to

the project. The balance of funding came from UBC alumni and other philanthropists.

The station has typically been used for only about six weeks a year, but Tortell hopes the renovation will allow the site to be much busier.

"The vision going forward is to use the camp as a hub, as a catalyst for what we call experiential field-based learning, which is to say education of students and others in the land and on the land," said Tortell.

"And not just looking at geology but hydrogeology, geophysics, atmospheric science.. all these subdisciplines within earth sciences, and teaching students to draw information and knowledge from those different disciplines to get a better understanding of the complexity of various earth system phenomena.

Tortell also hopes to draw on the area's original inhabitants for educational material.

"Indigenous knowledge, of course, is drawn directly from land-based observation and learning and living," he said, "and I think the station is a really nice opportunity for us to think about how we incorporate those ideas and perspectives into what we teach our students."



Consider the various plants, fungi, and trees that contribute to and depend on a functioning balanced ecosystem. These edible mushrooms grow at particular times within specific zones. It would be a disaster to lose them.

Health Canada and the Bees

Health Canada has 100,000 new reasons to rethink approval of controversial pesticides November 5, 2014

OTTAWA – More than 110,000 people have told Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) not to register flupyradifurone, Bayer's latest bee-killing pesticide. Over the past three weeks, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, David Suzuki Foundation and SumOfUs.org spearheaded a campaign to inform the public of the opportunity to submit formal comments to the PMRA. "We shared the facts about flupyradifurone, and the response has been incredible," said Paul Ferris, of SumOfUs.org. "Over 110,000 Canadians sent a clear message to PMRA: Protect the bees."

The PMRA proposed approving flupyradifurone in September, initiating a mandatory comment period that ended November 3, 2014. Flupyradifurone has the same "mode of action" as bee-killing neonicotinoids: both types of pesticides attack the nervous systems of insects. In its decision, the PMRA said flupyradifurone, like neonicotinoids, is toxic to bees and could also pose a threat to birds and small mammals.

"We're calling this the new f-word," said Lisa Gue of the David Suzuki Foundation. "Clearly Canadians share our concern about allowing yet another pesticide in this class to contaminate the environment." The PMRA announced a review of neonicotinoid pesticides in 2013 after admitting on its website that their use as a seed treatment on corn and soybeans is unsustainable because they kill bees. Despite the review, the PMRA has continued to allow use of neonicotinoid pesticides in Canada. "Why does the PMRA con-

tinue to approve more bee-killing poisons?" asked Mr. Bennett. "It's time for a complete review of how pesticides are regulated in Canada."

The following organizations are calling on Health Canada to reject flupyradifurone:

Sierra Club Canada Foundation
David Suzuki Foundation
Pollination Canada
National Farmers Union
SumOfUs.Org
Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Friends of the Earth
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
For more information contact:
Lisa Gue, David Suzuki Foundation,
(613) 914-0747, lgue@davidsuzuki.org
John Bennett, Sierra Club Canada Foundation,
(613) 291-6888, jb@sierraclub.ca

Recycled Plastic Gifts in this gift giving season

The following was a release from last August (2014) but is maybe relevant in this gift giving season. Why not provide students with something that they may need anyway and at the same time recycle some of the plastic that our society consumes.

Thanks to the increase in plastics recycling, more and more everyday products such as school supplies are being made with recycled plastics. So it's now easier than ever to find the things kids need to succeed at school while also helping the environment. Here are some examples:

BASIC SUPPLIES

School supplies made with recycled plastics help divert used plastics from landfills to become a resource for making new products.

When shopping online or in-store, look for many back-to-school necessities, such as folders, rulers and scissors made with recycled plastics.

BACKPACKS

For another great way to help the environment, look for backpacks made with recycled plastic fabrics. To make the fabrics, used plastics are melted, stretched into fibers, and woven into durable, lightweight, water-resistant fabrics that then are used to create backpacks in a large variety of sizes, colors and styles.

LUNCH BOXES AND SNACK BAGS

To help protect food and generate less waste, look for durable lunch boxes and snack bags made with recycled plastics. These often feature plastic foam insulation to help keep food cool, as well as airtight seals that can reduce exposure to air to keep food fresher.

SCHOOL CLOTHES

From jackets to T-shirts to school uniforms,

look for styles made with recycled plastic fabrics. Thanks to the versatility of plastics, recycled plastic fabrics are available in a variety of weights and textures, from fleece to poplin. These fabrics are durable, comfortable and surprisingly soft.

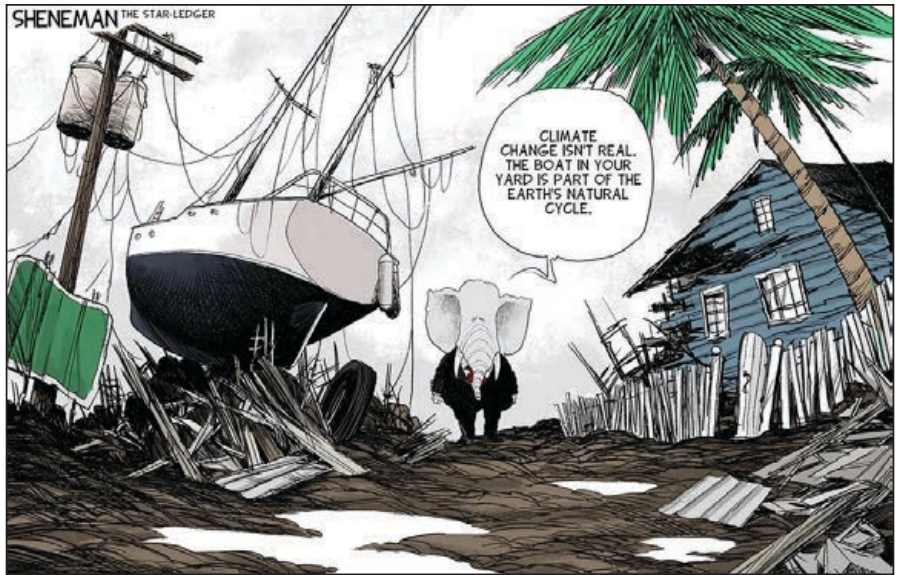
TECHNOLOGY

In more and more classrooms, portable technology is used as an integral part of learning.

To help protect your kids' expensive devices, look for tablet covers, laptop bags and smartphone cases made with tough recycled plastics.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

The use of recycled plastics in schools doesn't end with the supplies you acquire for your kids. As the use of recycled plastics expands, schools are investing in durable playground equipment made with used plastic packaging. Depending on size, a single playground can help save tens of thousands of plastic containers from landfills.



Menominee Nation after 100 years of good forestry. All ecosystem services intact.



Contrasting ecosystem services in background with lack of them in foreground. Compare with the Menominee First Nation's system.

...Continued from front page

It contradicts Murray's commitment to the phaseout of fish farms in the Discovery Islands region earlier this year despite ongoing court challenges by fish farm companies.

The minister also recently made the decision to renew all the fish farms' licences for only two years rather than the maximum six years, he noted.

Yet when the framework for the transition plan was released this summer, language in the document "muddies the waters" around Ottawa's commitment to the 2025 timeline and eliminating net-pens, Proboszcz said.

In particular, the document's vision state-

ment that suggests the plan will "progressively minimize or eliminate interactions between salmon open net-pens and wild salmon" is particularly alarming, he said.

"The vision statement now talks about only minimizing the interactions with wild salmon." Proboszcz said.

"If you put that on top of these three fish farm expansions, I'm kind of concerned (the federal government) is changing their trajectory or losing their resolve.

The new framework also highlights fish farm technology, such as semi-closed containment systems — yet to be proven and in an experimental phase with no feasibility or operational timelines — still involve raising

farmed salmon in the ocean, he added.

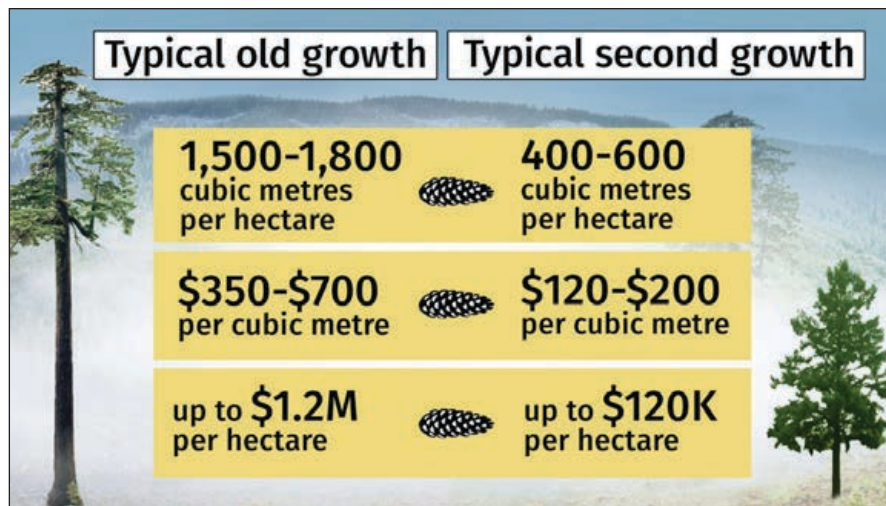
"And I don't think we should be waiting an unlimited amount of time until this vague idea of a solution is complete," he said.

"We actually have more knowledge about completely contained land-based farms in B.C., and operating on the east coast of Florida," he added, noting the precipitous decline of wild salmon stocks across B.C. is urgent.

"Salmon can't wait forever."

Cermaq Canada did not respond to questions or a request for comment before publishing deadline.

Canada's National Observer



This is the industry's admission that cutting old growth devalues forests. They admit 66% reduction in biomass above ground, and 90% reduction in economic value per hectare



We are being told that the wood pellet industry uses only waste wood (useful for no other purpose). This photo from the boundary country provides evidence that that this is not always true. This is the chipping part of the pellet making process. While legal, pellets do not make a lot of sense if trees are being cut to supply materials. Besides, waste wood has a very important role as a forest regenerator becoming compost.

B.C. kills wolves for no reason; sickening strategy to continue

BY CHELSEA GREER & CHRIS GENOVALI

Special to Okanagan Newspaper Group

The government of British Columbia's controversial wolf cull program, which has killed 1,709 wolves since initiated in 2015, has been extended another five years.

This year, the province released the results of its Predator Reduction for Caribou

Recovery Engagement Survey. Nearly 60 per cent of respondents opposed killing wolves ostensibly to save caribou.

Taxpayers have already shelled out more than \$6 million for what many scientists, conservationists, and British Columbians have condemned as an "inhuman" slaughter of wolves that has dubious scientific support as a conservation measure for endangered caribou.

Over the past four winters alone, the province has spent this exorbitant amount of taxpayer dollars to trap, hunt, and shoot wolves from low-flying aircraft. Considering the program has been operational for six years, following decades of "unofficial" government-sanctioned aerial gunning, poisoning and sterilization, five more years of killing wolves could bring collective costs beyond \$10 million.

More importantly, this program will continue to incur a grave additional cost — the suffering and lives of hundreds, if not thousands, more wolves. This price is ethically and ecologically unjustifiable.

The level of human-caused wolf mortality in B.C. can only be described as staggering.

In addition to the number of wolves dying at the hands of lethal control programs, the

B.C. government estimates that some 1,200 wolves are killed annually because of recreational hunting and trapping, all sanctioned and encouraged by the province.

Notably, where the welfare and humane treat-

ment of wild and domestic animals falls under provincial jurisdiction, B.C. is one of two Canadian provinces that has not adopted the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) standards when revising their regulations.

B.C.'s wolf kill program is not in accordance with this national standard.

In a 2016 report written by two members of the Provincial Mountain Caribou Recovery Science Team, the authors concede:

"There are no humane methods to directly reduce wolf numbers, but aerial removal is the only method of killing enough wolves (and entire packs) to reduce wolf densities with no risk of by-catch."

Five years later, the method remains the same, but the province's narrative on aerial removal has shifted to "the most effective and humane method." Further, the B.C. government asserts that their approach to predator killing follows the current American Veterinary Medical Association guidelines for euthanasia of wildlife in field conditions — a claim that is more aspirational than actual and holds no accountability. Killing wolves by aerial gunning does not conform with the guidelines.

Raincoast Conservation Foundation's carnivore expert Chris Darimont has cautioned that "keeping caribou herds afloat would require the extraordinary persecution of wolves, carried out over large landscapes and over long periods (perhaps on the order of decades)."

The B.C. government has yet to conduct an environmental assessment of a provincial management scheme for wolves that has always relied on killing, via recreational hunting and lethal control, as its focus.

Wolves play a profound role in the ecosystems in which they live, influencing a variety of other flora and fauna.

Removing wolves from ecosystems can adversely affect ecological and evolutionary relationships, causing substantial changes in the number, behaviour, and distribution of plants and animals. Environments without wolves can suffer from severe ecological imbalances and environmental impoverishment.

Although killing wolves might provide temporary relief for caribou, long-term and permanent recovery of endangered herds is an unlikely outcome. At best, culling wolves is wildlife management masquerading as conservation in an effort to avoid doing what is clearly necessary, i.e., protect caribou from the ecological harm caused by people and industry.

Caribou have co-evolved with and depend on increasingly rare old-growth forests to shield them from predators and provide the lichen they eat. Accordingly, safeguarding intact old growth forests and recovering degraded habitats are the most important aspects of caribou recovery. Recent research from the University of Alberta suggests that restoration of caribou habitat can reduce not only wolf predatory efficiency, but also regional wolf density.

The dilemma, however, is that despite these restoration efforts, including wolf control, landscapes are not going to favour caribou again for a very long time, if ever.

Owing largely to combined adverse effects of industrial forestry and climate change, habitat required by many mountain caribou herds is unlikely to be viable in 50 to 100 years. With this outlook, is such a large experiment in wolf control, given its limited signal of efficacy and an unrelenting appetite of industry, worth the carnage?

Chelsea Greer is Raincoast Conservation Foundation's wolf conservation program coordinator. Chris Genovali is Raincoast's executive director.

MEMBERSHIP FORM Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society • Box 787, Summerland, B.C. VOH 1Z0

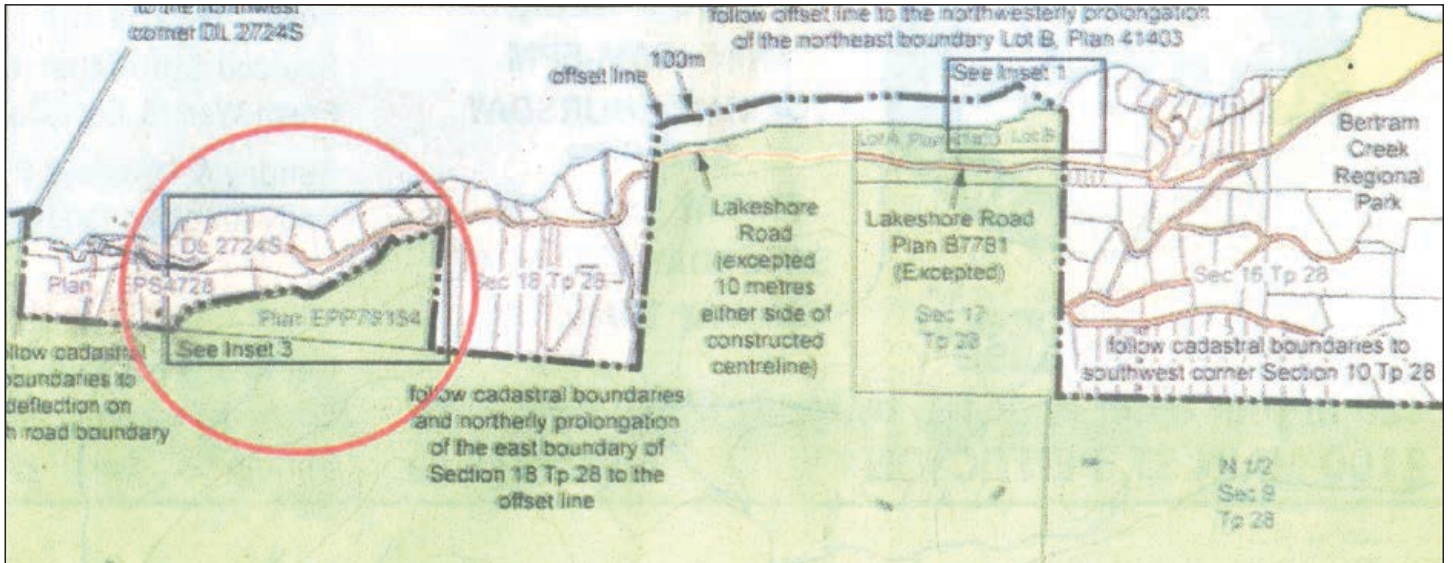
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Park Addition Will Provide Key Link

By Okanagan Newspaper Group Staff

Nature enthusiasts say the addition of 21 hectares to Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park along Lakeshore Road in Kelowna has been on their “wish list” for years.

The expansion will open up new hiking opportunities and help with search and rescue efforts, according to the non-profit group Friends of the South Slopes.

The area being added to the park is upland of Lakeshore Road beyond the city of Kelowna’s southern boundary.

Although it’s a relatively small area compared to the park’s overall size of 11,038 hectares, the addition is along the park’s main entrance route. Its inclusion will allow for the addition of a new trail, called the Golden Mile.

“Inclusion of the Golden Mile trail into Okanagan Mountain Park has been on (our) wish list for a very long time,” the Friends of the South Slopes posted on their Facebook page.

“The trail is crucial for access to Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park for trail maintenance projects and for safety and search and rescue.

Most of Okanagan Mountain Park, established in 1973, is accessible only by foot, bike, or horseback. It has six marine campgrounds along the 33-kilometre-long lakeshore.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

The OSPS was instrumental in establishing Okanagan Mountain Park. We applaud the FOSS work for this addition.

The 21-hectare area, circled and identified on this map as Plan EPP78184, upland of Lakeshore Road at the south end of Kelowna, is being added to Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park (the area shown in green). The map below identifies the area in relation to the overall park size.

