

Minister of
Fisheries and Oceans



Ministre des
Pêches et des Océans

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E6

AUG 26 2009

Dear

I understand your concerns, and appreciate the opportunity to assure you that one of the highest priorities of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in Pacific Region is the conservation of Pacific salmon stocks.

I will provide some broader context on these issues, and outline specific actions the Department is taking to protect and conserve our wild salmon.

The coastwide scope of the decline that has occurred across all Pacific salmon species suggests that this decline is associated with much larger ecological events than localized salmon farming. These events include climate change and changes in ocean productivity along our West Coast.

In addition to recognizing the impact of global changes, DFO also understands potential impacts of local conditions.

The Department supports the development of sustainable aquaculture within the context of conserving and rebuilding our wild Pacific salmon. DFO ensures that all aquaculture operations are subject to rigorous environmental standards under a number of statutes and regulations, including the *Fisheries Act* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, to ensure our marine ecosystems are not compromised.

In addition, *Canada's Policy for the Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon*, which is the basis for fishery management plans, sets out a process for the protection, conservation and rebuilding of wild salmon and their marine and freshwater ecosystems.

The Department is committed to continually improving the management of aquaculture based on the best available science.

Regarding your concerns about approvals for aquaculture operations, Mr. Justice Hinkson's recent decision in *Alexandra Morton et al v. the A.G. of British Columbia and Marine Harvest Canada* states that, until February 2010, the Province of British Columbia will continue in its current role managing aquaculture within the province. The Department is giving the implications of the decision full consideration, including discussions with the Province of British Columbia and broad-based consultations.

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With regard to sea lice, DFO recognizes that a heavy sea lice burden can impact the survivability of individual pink salmon smolts. The Department has taken significant action through sea lice research, including monitoring juvenile pink and chum salmon for sea lice in the Broughton Archipelago and conducting ocean circulation studies in that area.

The ongoing analysis of this research aids DFO in developing effective management measures and options to minimize risk of farm-origin sea lice. More recently, the industry has also developed coordinated management in the Broughton Archipelago to remove fish from pens on these routes in advance of and during juvenile migration, as well as early treatment prior to juvenile outmigration.

DFO has also studied closed-containment technologies. The Department has supported research into the development of innovative technologies that enhance the efficiency of production systems while reducing impacts to the environment.

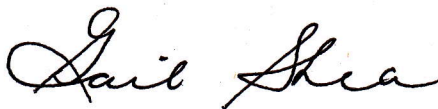
A 2008 workshop on closed containment held by the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat highlighted that while there are no closed, confined systems currently being used exclusively for Atlantic salmon, there are potential technologies that show promise for improving Atlantic salmon production and for restricting and controlling interactions. The next steps will be to use the knowledge contained in the technical reviews in conjunction with a socio-economic analysis that is underway to help inform potential development of pilot projects in the future.

DFO's Science Branch has worked closely with the industry on several in-water "bag" systems (an initial form of closed containment) to reduce risks of sea lice transmission. A modelling system has been developed to test the economic and biological feasibility of such systems, while considering such variables as current conditions, temperature, siting, etc. The model would allow industries and aquaculture regulators to make informed decisions about the efficacy of containment systems.

Important questions remain unanswered regarding the potential environmental implications of commercial-scale salmon production in closed-containment systems, such as energy demands. Further scientific research is necessary before closed-containment fish farming becomes a practical and realistic alternative.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me with your concerns. Please be assured that the Department will continue to work to conserve and protect salmon stocks for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gail Shea".

Gail Shea, P.C., M.P.