



GOING VIRAL: IMPACT

Dan Lewis & Bonny Glambeck collect data to monitor for PRV. Photo: Jérémy Mathieu

The backbone of life on the coast is threatened by PRV

As we prepared to release our Going Viral report to the media last February, we were having a back and forth about delaying, as stories about an emerging global pandemic were beginning to dominate the news cycle. After stalling for a week, we realized that if we did not act soon, there would be nothing but Covid-19 in the news!

The goal of our study was to establish the presence or absence of PRV on salmon farms in Clayoquot Sound. Samples were collected adjacent to stocked farms and sent to the Atlantic Veterinary College for testing by Dr. Fred Kibenge, one of the world's leading salmon virologists. Samples from all but one farm tested positive for PRV.

There was an immediate response to the release of Going Viral. Industry and governments have long maintained that PRV is: 1) endemic to BC waters, and 2) harmless to wild salmon. Our samples were tested right down to the level of variant—and we found PRV-1a, which originates in the Atlantic Ocean—not the Pacific.

So the tune suddenly changed. Cermaq and Creative issued a statement to the Clayoquot Salmon Roundtable, stating that PRV-1a is the 'BC strain' they had been referring to all along (for which no-one has ever put forward a genetic sequence), and that they knew it is present on all their farms. But they denied it was having any impact on farmed or wild salmon.

In Pacific Chinook salmon, DFO scientists report that PRV is strongly associated with the rupture of red blood cells, overwhelming the vital organs, resulting in jaundice, organ failure and death. Of particular concern, PRV-1a is replicating in Creative Salmon's operations near Tofino, adapting to a Pacific species (Chinook), and spreading through the waters

of Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region—where wild Chinook are on the brink of extinction.

Then they dropped the bomb: "Jaundice Syndrome is a disease of unknown cause that affects farmed Chinook salmon in BC." Given that Creative has had a jaundice problem since 2004, and they are rearing Pacific Chinook, one would hope that getting to the bottom of the matter would be of utmost urgency in order not to harm wild salmon. With the Department of Fisheries (DFO) sitting at the Roundtable, we would hope they might chime in, or at least express some concern that Creative has done nothing about their Jaundice Syndrome problem for sixteen years.

The fact is that DFO's Dr Kristi Miller-Saunders and her team were called in to investigate Creative's Jaundice back in 2011. She concluded that PRV is the problem. That scientific paper has not yet been published by DFO because Creative Salmon and government scientists can't agree on what role PRV played in the jaundice. The Globe and Mail recently ran an exclusive interview with Miller-Saunders in which she stated "If it is an inconvenient truth there is a good possibility if [a study] is industry funded that doesn't come out".

Three court battles have been waged (and won) to stop the transfer of PRV-infected fish into open-net pen salmon farms. A 2015 judgment stated "The evidence suggests that the disease agent (PRV) may be harmful to the protection and conservation of fish, and therefore a lack of full scientific certainty should not be used [as] a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation". In other words, implement the Precautionary Principle—as DFO is mandated to do.



FIELD REPORT SEMI-CLOSED CONTAINMENT SYSTEM



A FALSE SOLUTION FOR SALMON FARMING

Our Clayoquot Salmon Investigation (CSI) program has been monitoring the installation of Cermaq's experimental Semi-Closed Containment System (SCCS) at their Millar Channel site in Ahousaht First Nations territory.

It seems very little will be contained. The system will still be dumping raw sewage into the otherwise pristine waters of Clayoquot Sound. What other farmer dumps their sewage directly into water bodies? Furthermore, SCCS will continue to pump 65 billion viral particles per hour into the ocean environment—so it will not address one of the biggest known threats to wild salmon.

It appears that the purpose of Cermaq's new facility might be to protect their own fish stock from the deleterious effects of salmon farming! For example, Cermaq claims the new system will protect their farmed fish from Hazardous Algal Blooms (HABs). Yet the SCCS will continue to deposit the very sewage which fuels unseasonal algal blooms like the one which killed 205,000 Atlantic salmon at their Clayoquot Sound operations last November.

In a recent interview about the trial, Cermaq manager David Kiemele said, "The one thing we do need is time". But wild salmon are on the brink of extinction, with numbers lower than ever seen in Canadian history. This is not the time to invest public money in a dead-end technology. It's time for Cermaq to face the music: fish farms are coming out of BC waters.



Get Wild! welcomes Wickaninnish Inn Chef Carmen Ingham



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VENDORS & ALLIES!

Get Wild! is the first-of-its-kind wild salmon recommendation program, with the goal of protecting wild salmon by encouraging people to ask for and purchase wild caught salmon only.

During the Covid-19 slowdown we have been busy registering new Get Wild! vendors, and now have 25 vendors and allies. A warm welcome to our newest members: The Wickaninnish Inn, The Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild, Gaia Grocery and Basic Goodness Pizzeria. We couldn't be more excited to have you on board!

We would like to thank all of the wild salmon fishermen, Get Wild! food vendors, and the supportive local residents and seasonal visitors that are helping to keep Clayoquot Sound wild! Because of your unwavering dedication to the health of Tofino's coastlines, we are able to work towards a sustainable wild salmon economy that promotes great long term jobs, healthy wild salmon runs, great food and thriving ecosystems.

—Nicole Holman, Get Wild! Coordinator

Get Wild! is wholly funded by Ocean Outfitters.
More info: getwildsalmon.ca



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