



Friends of Clayoquot Sound

September 14, 2007

UPDATE ON FARMED ATLANTIC SALMON ESCAPE IN CLAYOQUOT SOUND

It is still unknown how many Atlantic salmon escaped from Mainstream Canada's (Cermaq's) open net-cage farm near Saranac Island after a September 4th accident. Despite numerous calls to Mainstream representatives and government officials, no solid information on escape numbers could be obtained.

The net-cage that was torn during harvesting held about 25,000 Atlantic salmon when the accident happened. Mainstream has recaptured some thousands of fish from inside the predator net that encircles the whole farm. The company claims the remaining fish are still contained within the predator net and have not escaped into the wild, but that cannot be confirmed. Recapture efforts are still underway.

Escaped Atlantic salmon can endanger wild Pacific salmon by vying for food and space, and by transferring disease and parasites. The biggest fear is that escaped Atlantics could begin reproducing in Clayoquot's rivers and competing with the already diminished Pacific salmon runs.

The Saranac salmon farm is also situated in a Rockfish Conservation Area. Friends of Clayoquot Sound are questioning why an open net-cage farm is allowed to operate in a Rockfish Conservation Area and why the farm recently received a 20 year renewal. Eight of Mainstream's farms in Clayoquot Sound are located within or on the boundaries of Rockfish Conservation Areas. Net-cage fish farms release untreated sewage, chemicals and antibiotics into the ocean. Studies have found elevated levels of toxic mercury in rockfish living near salmon farms.