

Turning of the Tide



FRASER RIVERKEEPER®

“Salmon Forever”

TURNING OF THE TIDE

May 2010, Issue 8

Fraser Riverkeeper Charges Canada with Failure to Enforce Environmental Laws

Fraser Riverkeeper, together with a coalition of Canadian and American environmental groups, submitted a complaint on May 4th demanding an investigation into the Canadian government's failure to enforce its environmental laws to stop pollution affecting one of Canada's -- and the world's -- most productive salmon fisheries. The announcement follows the submission of a petition to enforce environmental law to the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

The groups claim that the Canadian government has failed to prevent ongoing and continuous discharges of toxic sewage from its Iona Island Water Wastewater Treatment Plant at the mouth of the Fraser River. The discharge is entering directly into the Georgia Strait, through which millions of migrating salmon pass on their way to and from the Fraser River. The Fraser is one of the world's most productive salmon rivers, and the Strait of Georgia

is a renowned and economically important commercial and sport fishery.

“One of the greatest threats to North America's waterways and fisheries is the lack of enforcement of our environmental laws,” said Douglas Chapman, Fraser Riverkeeper. “Non-enforcement is essentially the removal of laws that protect the public and our common resources. We have been told in the past that cleaning up the Fraser is not in the public interest; surely, it is a sad day when a clean and healthy environment is not in the public's interest!”

The coalition includes petitioner Fraser Riverkeeper and are joined by co-petitioners Waterkeeper Alliance, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper, Ottawa Riverkeeper, Grand Riverkeeper, Fundy Baykeeper, Petitcodiac Riverkeeper, Georgian Baykeeper, and the David Suzuki Foundation. These groups allege that Canada's failure to enforce provisions of the Fisheries Act has led to degradation of these water bodies, and that the Iona Island Waste Water Treatment Plan is violating the Act through systemic, ongoing contamination, causing harm to the watershed.

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“The efforts to get sewage treatment plants to comply with Fisheries Act laws is a well-known problem that is long overdue for action -- and our CEC submission is last-ditch effort to get Canada’s government to take our environmental laws seriously,” said Lauren Hornor of Fraser Riverkeeper. “In appealing to the CEC, our groups are confident that a factual record of past legal proceedings and the pattern of government inaction will help educate the public and initiate change in Canada.”

The Canadian government has a history of deliberate inaction in its responsibilities regarding enforcement of the Fisheries Act. In 1998, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development’s report, “Enforcing Canada’s Pollution Laws: The Public Interest Must Come First!” laid out the weakness and ineffectiveness of Canada’s commitment to enforce environmental laws and to protect Canada’s water.

Here, the pattern of lax enforcement continues. In 2006, the Canadian justice system accepted charges laid by Douglas Chapman, then with Ecojustice, regarding the Iona Plant’s discharges, and a judge found that there was sufficient evidence to establish a case.

Chapman stated, “The toxic effects on fish in the Burrard Inlet, Fraser River estuary, and Georgia Strait cause harm to the people who rely on those fish for recreation, income, and sustenance. These effects include population effects and the safety of consuming fish from the area.”

Nonetheless, the Attorney General of Canada intervened, obtaining a stay of the charges that same day, alleging it was not in the public’s interest to proceed.

Meanwhile, the treatment plant continues to repeatedly fail the toxicity tests required by its provincial permit. Documents obtained by Fraser Riverkeeper show that since the federal government intervened in the case to allow the polluting to continue, acutely toxic sewage has been discharged from the Iona WWTP on at least eleven additional occasions between May 7, 2007 and October 6, 2009.

“The crimes continue at Iona, and there is no movement toward the installation of secondary treatment, which would eliminate the toxicity of the discharges,” Chapman continued. “This must stop!”

The CEC was formed under a side agreement to NAFTA and acts as a watchdog to ensure that each of the member countries enforces its environmental laws. The CEC Secretariat will have an opportunity to formally

Gulf Coast Oil Disaster Recovery Underway

Waterkeeper Alliance has several members along the Gulf Coast who are battling at the front lines to protect the shoreline, wetlands, birds, and waters. These Waterkeepers are facing an unprecedented task of cleaning up the huge and devastating BP oil disaster.

They have put together the [Save Our Gulf](#) site for news and donations.

The Waterkeeper Alliance has set up a restricted fund that will go directly to Waterkeeper members in the Gulf Coast who are battling the oil spill. [Here is the link](#) to information about the fund.

[Please donate now to help the Gulf Waterkeepers fight this disaster](#)

a watchdog to ensure that each of the member countries enforces its environmental laws. The CEC Secretariat will have an opportunity to formally

recommend that an investigation be launched into the allegations that the Canadian government is failing to uphold provisions of the Fisheries Act, with respect to toxic discharges at sewage treatment plants.

Consumers Demand Sustainable Fish Choices When Grocery Shopping; Waterkeepers Stand Up for Pacific Salmon

On Saturday May 8th Fraser Riverkeeper will stand up with Alexandra Morton and Tye Bridge of Wild Salmon Circle and announce the launch of Stand Up for Pacific Salmon (SUPS), a new consumer campaign aimed at eliminating farmed salmon from big retailer's shelves.

What people don't know about farmed salmon can hurt them, not to mention salmon, seals, and other marine wildlife. "That innocuous piece of salmon on your plate has a sordid history," said Lauren Hornor of Fraser Riverkeeper in British Columbia, co-creator of the SUPS campaign. "As citizens of the Pacific coast, we're concerned about the impact our buying choices have on wild salmon."

Fraser Riverkeeper is one of over twenty Waterkeeper organizations from Alaska to California that announced the launch of the Stand Up for Pacific Salmon (SUPS) campaign in their watersheds. Using a cartoon, a documentary film, and informational pamphlets, the groups are educating West Coast consumers about the impact of purchasing net-pen farmed salmon— and calling on the "Big Six" grocery retailers to remove the product from their shelves.

"Many people who care about the oceans and their own health have thought choosing farmed salmon was a sustainable and wise choice, but this is definitely not the case," said Hornor. "Net-pen salmon farms are floating feedlots that have spread sea-lice, pollution, chemicals, and infectious diseases into pristine habitats all around the world, including British Columbia and Washington, and are having a devastating impact on wild salmon stocks."



Beautiful Fraser River, wild salmon spawning grounds

The SUPS campaign asks customers of Costco, Safeway, Tesco, Kroger, SuperValu, and Trader Joe's to follow the example of their fellow retailer Target. In January the discount chain, on the advice of the Monterey Bay

Aquarium's SeafoodWatch program, dropped net-pen salmon from over 1,700 stores. "Consumers can turn the industry around, promoting major reform by *voting with their wallets*," said Hornor. "This would not only help our oceans and wild salmon, it would lessen risks to human health."

"Reforming the industry has been like trying to get tobacco companies to admit that cigarettes cause cancer," says Tye Bridge, co-creator of the SUPS program and a member of the BC-based volunteer

FRK Executive Director Discusses SUPS on NPR

Lauren Hornor appeared April 29th on NPR's [EcoReport](#) .

[Click here for the show, which will be archived for 2 weeks.](#)

group Wild Salmon Circle. "At one point the salmon farmers even hired the same PR agency used by Big Tobacco. They seem capable of doing anything to make consumers believe their product is sustainable, except actually becoming more sustainable by moving to closed-tank systems."

Because of the presence of PCBs and other substances, the journal *Environmental Research* recommends that farmed salmon should be eaten no more than "between 0.4 and 1 meal per month." This confirmed a similar 2005 study in the *Journal of Nutrition*, recommending that pregnant women, children, and nursing mothers avoid farmed salmon because of high levels of pollutants.

Other concerns for consumers include the industry's use of antibiotics and artificial coloring. "The truth about net-pen salmon is outrageous, and not all that appetizing," said Bridge. "Without the orange and pink dyes put into their feed, for instance, farmed salmon flesh would be an unappealing shade of gray."

Fraser Riverkeeper to Join "Get Out Migration"

[Wild Salmon Are Sacred](#) and Alexandra Morton have called on everyone who loves wild salmon to participate in 'The Get Out Migration', which began on Earth Day and is closing this coming Mother's Day weekend in Victoria. The Migration is a call to action for people across British Columbia to

participate in marches and rallies, and raise awareness in government that fish farms are endangering the health and integrity of wild salmon ecosystems.

Alexandra began her trip by boat in the Ahta River, and coursed through the Broughton Archipelago to Sointula. From there she began the long walk to Victoria. Many individuals and organizations have been planning similar migrations and paddling trips to synch up with the compassionate vibe of this march.

Fraser Riverkeeper will be joining the march Saturday, May 8, in Victoria. At 2:00 will be a rally at Centennial Square, with speakers and music. Other activities such as a salmon BBQ and "fish on sticks" regalia will take place. At 3:45 is the final march to the legislature, where Alexandra and others will complete the long migration

and celebrate with a Masala percussion group and salmon puppets. Final speakers will also take the stage.

At this rally, Fraser Riverkeeper's Executive Director Lauren Hornor will join Wild Salmon Circle's Tyeen Bridge to announce the consumer campaign Stand Up for Pacific Salmon (SUPS). Riverkeeper Doug Chapman, Board Member Carol McDonald, and Outreach Director Mary Woodbury will also be in attendance at the march and rally. Please join us if you are in Victoria this weekend.

Comments Submitted on Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality

On behalf of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper, Fraser Riverkeeper, and Ottawa Riverkeeper, please see our [comment regarding Health Canada's draft *Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality, Third Edition*](#), prepared by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Recreational Water Quality of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Health and the Environment, dated September 2009.

Fraser Riverkeeper Granted Standing to Participate in Judicial Inquiry into Decline of Sockeye Salmon

Fraser Riverkeeper has been granted formal standing to participate in the federal judicial inquiry into the decline of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River.

The Cohen Commission granted standing to 20 groups and individuals on April 16th, inviting them to provide evidence to the commission, giving the organizations the ability to propose witnesses, cross-examine witnesses, and make oral submissions to the commission.

Fraser Riverkeeper was granted standing as part of the Conservation Coalition, which also includes the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform, Georgia Strait Alliance, Raincoast Conservation Foundation, Watershed Watch Salmon Society, Mr. Otto Langer, and the David Suzuki Foundation. This group was represented by Ecojustice in the standing application.

The Cohen Commission was established on November 5, 2009 with the appointment of the Honourable Bruce Cohen as Commissioner. Under its Terms of Reference, the commission will hold hearings to investigate and report on the decline of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. Based on its findings, the commission will make recommendations for improving the sustainability of the sockeye salmon fishery in the Fraser River, including, as required, any changes to the policies, practices, and procedures of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in relation to the management of the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery.



One of many recent salmon rallies to raise awareness of the fish farming crisis

Reading Series: Author Callout

We are seeking environmental and other authors to collaborate with us by promoting our [Reading Series](#), which unites artists, poets, and authors with members of the community. The Reading Series consists of an author reading from one of his or her books focusing on wilderness, natural resources, conservation, or other similar topics. The book may be non-fiction, prose, or fiction. After a brief reading and discussion of the book, the author may answer questions, and sign and sell copies of his or her book.

Fraser Riverkeeper and partner H₂O Plus launched our first of the series at H₂O Plus's store on Robson to celebrate World Water Day this year. [Jordan Scott](#) read from his poetry chapbook *Silt*—poems related to the Fraser River. During this series, H₂O Plus donated a portion of sales during the in-store event to Fraser Riverkeeper and offered event shoppers a discounted coupon.

To get involved, please [contact Mary](#) at Fraser Riverkeeper.

Earth Day Pegleg Bar Cleanup a Great Success

For the third consecutive year, Fraser Riverkeeper, in partnership with Woodtone, the City of Chilliwack, Rotz Disposal, and other friends of the Fraser River, cleaned up Pegleg Gravel Bar in Chilliwack on Sunday, April 18th, to honor Earth Day.

The event was focused on beautifying and restoring the riverbed at Pegleg Bar while increasing community participation in environmental stewardship and awareness of the significance of these gravel bars to local flora and fauna as well to local residents and community groups who appreciate their value.

We want to thank everyone for coming out to Chilliwack on such a beautiful day this year. We collected nearly 7 tonnes of trash, including 1.5 tonnes of scrap metals, from around the bar. Special thanks go to our volunteers Jami Questa and Kristen Sivertz for leading the children's corner as well as Maheen Javed for her development of the kids' corner project. We want to thank Woodtone, The Young Foundation, City of Chilliwack, Andy Rotz, Waste Services Inc., Royal Bank of Canada, Fortin's Home Hardware, Preserved Seed Café, Valley Tank, United Tool Rental, Chilliwack Water Store, Pro-Fab Manufacturing, Watson Gloves, and Tim Horton's for providing services and in-kind donations. We'd also like to thank the press that showed up to help create awareness in the Fraser River communities: Hawk FM, Valley Voice Online News, and Shaw T.V. Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who donated their time and services.



Scrap metal collected



Kid's corner with volunteers Jami and Kristen



Hauling in more scrap metal from the bar

We Need Your Support: Help Us Defend Our River

Fraser Riverkeeper operates on a small annual budget and relies on a small staff and team of volunteers. Fraser Riverkeeper has been working hard to ensure significant progress is made as we tirelessly defend and protect our beloved River.

In just the last few months, we have developed and launched a campaign to activate consumers from Alaska to California, filed a complaint with NAFTA'S Commission for Environmental Cooperation regarding Canada's failure to enforce environmental laws, and have sought and been granted standing in the Cohen Commission's judicial inquiry into the decline of sockeye salmon. We have launched a new Swim Drink Fish Map and Index, are organizing cleanups and outreach events, operating a Pollution Hotline and Patrol Program, and much more!

Please help us to continue to grow by DONATING (and receive a charitable tax receipt)!

Upcoming Events

June 20: Mountain Coop Equipment Paddlefest. FRK will have a community booth at Jericho Beach.

September 25: TD Friends of the Environment "Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup". Fraser Riverkeeper will be a site coordinator at Second Beach near Stanley Park in celebration of World Rivers Day 2010.

About Us

Citizen-based Fraser Riverkeeper is a registered non-profit Canadian charitable organization (BN 862234374 RR0001) dedicated to the protection, conservation and improvement of the water quality and fish habitat of the Fraser River and its tributaries. Full-time Riverkeeper, Doug Chapman,

patrols our waters by boat, responding to community pollution concerns and defending local waterways.

Canadian Waterkeepers Express Concerns over Bill

Canadian Waterkeepers submitted comments to the Committee on Finance, expressing concerns over proposed changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act contained within Bill C-9.

[Read full submission.](#)

<p>Fraser Riverkeeper Contact #303-207 West Hastings Vancouver, BC V6B 1H7 Phone: 778-737-4422 E-mail: info@fraserriverkeeper.ca Website: http://www.fraserriverkeeper.ca</p> <p>Board of Directors Mark Mattson, President Michael Chapman, Director Dr. Allan Connolly, Director Carol McDonald, Secretary/Treasurer Kari Siirala, Director</p> <p>Advisory Board Dr. Elaine MacDonald John Werring</p> <p>Staff Doug Chapman, Riverkeeper Lauren Brown Hornor, Executive Director Mary Woodbury, Outreach Director</p>	<p>Supporters Agent 5 Design BC Bike Race The Bullitt Foundation City of Chilliwack Coast Capital Savings Desktop Designs Ecojustice H2O Plus Harbour Air Hemisphere's Wine Guild Jack Johnson Foundation McLean Foundation Norcross Wildlife Foundation RBC Blue Water Fund Rivers Oceans And Mountains TD Friends of the Environment Foundation The Young Foundation TEVA The Tragically Hip</p>
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Fraser Riverkeeper is a member of [Waterkeeper Alliance](#), an international grassroots advocacy organization founded by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Fraser Riverkeeper. FRK is the first Waterkeeper program to be established in British Columbia, one of nine Waterkeeper programs located across Canada, and one of almost 190 worldwide.

