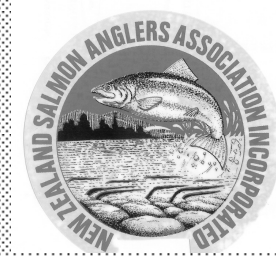


NZ Salmon Anglers Newsletter

JULY 2008 Number 96



**Salmon Release at Montrose
13 July 2008**

NEW ZEALAND SALMON ANGLERS ASSOCIATION (INC)
2008-09 OFFICE HOLDERS AND COMMITTEE

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	Warren Windelburn	027 211 0418	
Patron	Athol Price	332 7698	

Committee Meetings: The Committee meets on the first Monday each month (except January) at 7.30 pm in the Fish & Game premises, 3 Horatio Street, Christchurch. Members and supporters are welcome to attend these meetings.

Honorary Auditor: Trevor Hayes

Life Members: Lindsay Dell, Ron Dougherty, Tim Ellis, Brian Foley, Trevor Hayes, John Healy, Ken Hughey, Ross Lightfoot, Athol Price, Stephen Sparrow

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in any letters and articles in this newsletter are the authors' own and are not necessarily those of the New Zealand Salmon Anglers Association (Inc) or the Editor.



PRESIDENT'S EDITORIAL

When the salmon fishing season is over and you've cleaned your gear and packed it away, one often wonders "What am I going to do now?" Well, when it's to do with salmon, it never stops: We have been through the stripping process followed by ova planting and general maintenance work. I admire the tireless and continuous effort the team puts in at Montrose Hatchery.

On the other side of the fence, I was amazed at the preparation and effort required for the submissions to the Hearing relating to Central Plains Water Scheme. There are countless hours required and it's not just a matter of putting your thoughts down on paper, as evidence is required in a legal type format with the I's dotted and T's crossed. In this matter we were given fantastic guidance by Jason Holland from F&G.

Our team of Tim Ellis, Peter Robinson and Ron Stuart put the NZ Salmon Anglers' evidence forward to the Hearing. We were scheduled to be there by 1030 hours, as we may have been required to take the stand at an earlier time. Not the case, and we were required to sit all day in the Hearing and got on the stand closer to 1600 hours. Interesting though, as we had the opportunity of listening to other submissions and of particular interest was a geologist talking about the earthquake potential of the dam site and where the fault lines were. Clearly one would not wish to be

downstream of the dam as it is earthquake territory and the ground underneath is not suitable for water storage as seepage could occur. Two other presenters spoke in favour of the scheme because of world food shortages and their wells are already running dry. Seemed to me a bit hard to take when their cause seemed money-motivated and this scheme option is seemingly not the best outcome for overall interests.

The next opportunity of doing something was to attend a Fish Screening meeting held in Ashburton to discuss best option scenarios for suitable cost effective and efficient water intake screening to stop the loss of juvenile fish to the irrigation transfer schemes, mostly salmon but some trout and other native species. The meeting used a forum process for discussion which was used after we had been given presentations by expert speakers from Ecan, DoC, F&G and irrigators.

Rather an interesting evening with much to talk about, but at this point seemingly little action, as it is reported that around 200,000 salmon fry are lost annually to the irrigation system through improper screening or no screening. If these fish had survived my calculation is the eventual loss of 1.6 million kilos of returning salmon and these losses are those only that have been observed. The other point that struck me was talk from the irrigators that the fishing fraternity

should give concessions for some fish mortality to the water take schemes. This struck me as being rather naive as a concession is already given with the water take and there should be absolutely zero tolerance of any fish loss.

Each year the ova planting programme brings a new dimension and this year was no exception. We planted out some 360,000 salmon ova this season mostly in the Waimak and the balance Hurunui. A similar number was planted in the Rakaia by Rakaia Fishing Promotions. The exception this season was that the ova seemed to mature quicker and presented an urgency to get them placed instream as soon as possible. For this reason and immediate availability of manpower the majority of ova were placed in the large Instream Incubators (These were previously called "coffins", a name we thought was rather inappropriate considering that this was the place of "birth" of the salmon, not their final resting place!).

With the ever-increasing fuel costs, we are now more conscious than ever of the effect that this has on volunteers using their vehicles and we are working on plans with Fish & game to minimise this effect so that the previous levels of participation are still possible.

I urge all members to assist with a Secretary-Treasurer replacement for Pam Ellis. Please refer any suggestions to me or one of our committee, as this is a great interest activity for anyone with administration or office type skills and a great opportunity to be involved at the frontline of our Association.

It is great to see the Montrose salmon release open day back on the agenda and a great opportunity for families to be

involved. Unfortunately the first schedule day was postponed due to weather and safety conditions. Remember when entering these properties sanitize your footwear to stop any unwanted infections or conditions.

Stay warm and dry.

Ron Stuart

PRESIDENT


**Have you
paid your
subscription?**

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Salmon at Sea Agreement

by Ron Stuart, President NZSAA

I was privileged to attend a meeting, in Christchurch on 8 July, of the interested parties to this agreement, which encompassed Ministry of Fisheries, Fish & Game Central South Island and North Canterbury, NZ Salmon Anglers Association, NZ Sports Industry Association, and representatives of the commercial fishing companies like Sandford, United, Pegasus, Independent, Talleys and Richardson.

The objective of the meeting was to ratify a renewal of the Salmon at Sea Agreement for a further 3 year period.

To be witness to such a meeting was extremely gratifying, enforced by the great level of cooperation between all parties and the professional manner in which the renewal of the Agreement was settled.

In essence, the Agreement specifies a Salmon Conservation Area and Season and during the agreed period all vessels operating in the zone will report salmon catches, set a salmon catch limit, accept volunteer verifiers on board operational vessels, and pay a Salmon Levy for each kilogram of green weight landed.

The levy is to be used for future salmon enhancement programmes through the resources of Fish & Game, which in turn gives direct benefit to salmon anglers throughout Canterbury.

Without going into specifics I can tell you the Agreement is thorough and detailed, it has the support and cooperation of the commercial fishing companies and puts paid to any malicious accusations that the

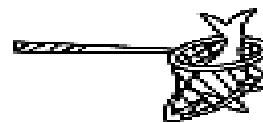
salmon fishery is being ripped off by the trawler operations. In fact, quite the reverse, as detailed records of salmon catches are recorded and for the 2007-2008 season from October to April a total of 581 kilograms of salmon was caught and the biggest catch was in January at 224 kgs. The year prior 2006-07 represented a total catch for the year of 645 kgs.

Given these figures, it is encouraging that with all our efforts over recent years with our Salmon Enhancement programmes and the concentration on ova planting that these low catch returns are evident. Particularly this past season, which we rate as one of our better for 20+ years.

I pay tribute and thanks to all the parties for their initiative in establishing this Agreement and for its continuance in a positive manner.

We personally can make a big difference to the salmon fishery for all activities once the fish are in our river system, but this Agreement goes a long way to assisting the survival of the species whilst at sea.

Ron Stuart



Our Day in Court

NZSAA Submissions on the Central Plains Water Scheme

by Peter Robinson

Salmon fishing saw me land up “in court” being grilled by four judges on Wednesday 26 June. Well, not quite, but a hearing in front of four commissioners, is pretty close.

Tim Ellis had approached me some weeks earlier at the Salmon Anglers AGM with a request to prepare a submission on behalf of the NZSAA in opposition to the Central Plains Water Scheme.

My task was to focus on the issues facing the Waimak salmon fishery under the CPW proposal and to submit a case to the commissioners for their consideration.

After extensive reading of experts’ evidence and with the sage advice of Fish and Game Environment Officer Jason Holland, the submission was ready to present.

The full submission as presented is available to view at ECan’s website. The main points of interest to the commissioners were:

Flow

Currently 22 cumecs (A permit) is taken from the river by various irrigators. CPW wants 40 cumec (B permit) on top of this. That’s a cumulative 62 cumecs. This water can be taken once the river flows above 36 cumecs.

In simple terms, during the salmon season, the river would run at minimum flow most of the time except in high to moderate flood.

The evidence presented already by a variety of experts show that this level of reduced flow for extensive periods of time would have significant and unacceptable adverse effects on the nationally significant Waimakariri salmon fishery.

Fish and Game and many other submitters have also identified this issue.

The fault for this lies with Environment Canterbury’s Waimakariri River Regional Plan that became policy in 2004. This plan allows allocation for too much water to be taken from the river at too low a flow.

Our submission argues that before any scheme for taking water from the river can be considered, the minimum flow level of A and B permit takes needs to be reset at a higher flow that protects the instream environment for salmon.

Kowai and Hacketts Creek

Commonly, submissions have drawn attention to the fact that CPW’s application provided insufficient detail for the commissioners and submitters to form opinions on many features of the scheme as proposed.

NZSAA chose specifically to bring attention to the fact that the applicant had completely overlooked the effects the scheme would have on the Hacketts Creek enhanced spawning area.

At the Hearing

Having arrived at the Town Hall around 10.00 am eventually we were “on” at about 4.00pm.

The commissioners appeared to have read our submissions carefully as they asked some pertinent questions.

They have had a huge amount of submitters’ information to consider and much of the NZSAA submission supported information already presented by others, particularly that of Fish and Game’s experts.

The commissioners were interested in flow figures around 100 cumecs. Various experts have suggested flows at this level, with variability, would be acceptable in maintaining environmental flows for salmon.

With regard to the Hacketts Creek, it is obvious the planned canal would effectively destroy the section of the stream used for spawning. They were interested in whether a siphon (the irrigation canal going under the creek) as is planned for the Kowai rather than a culvert (canal going over the creek) would be better for salmon passage. It was suggested this needs expert consideration, which has not yet occurred. The commissioners instructed the applicant to look into this. They were most interested in photos of our salmon enhancement activities in Hacketts Creek.

As an introduction to our submissions, President Ron Stuart gave an overview of NZSAA and its activities, particularly on the programme to enhance the salmon fishery.

Tim Ellis concluded NZSAA’s submissions with evidence regarding the Rakaia River, particularly as to angler access, fish screening, water quality and

quantity and the Water Conservation Order.

The whole process has been an interesting experience. Gathering the information, finding out how the system works, and trying to target information to best effect takes time and effort. I would like to acknowledge the support of Pam and Tim Ellis and Ron Stuart my fellow submitters. Tim and Pam have undertaken many of these submissions over the years and I now have some appreciation of the commitment, persistence and energy required.

Thanks to Jason Holland for his tutoring and guidance. Using lawyers, Fish and Game have literally spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in preparing and presenting their submissions and Jason was happy to share with us his knowledge and expertise. This help enabled us to present our case in the most effective way possible.

Whether the CPW “water harvest” scheme will go ahead and if so in what form, is to be decided some time in the future. I have been heartened by the quality and quantity of resources, information and thinking that have gone into the many submissions presented. The commissioners appear to be taking a genuine interest in these submissions. I trust that wise decisions will result and our salmon fishery will continue.

Peter Robinson



Felt Soled Wading Boots to be Banned

The Minister of Conservation agreed in principle last week with a Fish & Game New Zealand submission to ban the use of felt soled wading boots for freshwater fishing. The ban, yet to be approved and included in the proposed 2008/09 Anglers Notice for Fish and Game Regions, will be effective from 1 October 2008, and applies to freshwater sports fishing anglers in all New Zealand waterways, except those within the Taupo Fishery.

The Lake Taupo fishery is administered by the Department of Conservation. The Department has advised that if a ban were introduced for the rest of the country it would recommend that the Minister approve a ban applying in Taupo.

The ban applies to using felt-soled waders or footwear incorporating or having attached a sole of felted, matted or woven fibrous material when sports fishing.

Felt-soled boots are considered a high risk vector or carrier of microscopic aquatic organisms like didymo. Preventing the spread of didymo is an important aspect of ban, but it is increasingly understood that felt soles are an effective vector for other microscopic pest organisms. While there are procedures for decontaminating felt soled waders, it is acknowledged that these are not practical in many situations.

The proposed ban supports three of the objectives of the didymo long term management plan: to slow the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests throughout NZ, to protect valued sites and at-risk species, and to maintain the North Island free of didymo for as long as possible.

Earlier this year Fish & Game New Zealand consulted widely with agencies and stakeholders on the proposed ban. Formal submissions from MAF Biosecurity, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment Southland all supported the proposed ban. Of the 43 submissions made through the Fish & Game website, 20 supported the ban, 17 opposed it and six supported the ban with various conditions.

Some opposing the ban cited the safety provided by felt soled boots. Felt, or fibrous, soles provide a good grip on slippery boulders, and, for this reason, have become popular with anglers. However, other boots and sole types are available that offer alternative ways of maintaining grip on slippery surfaces.

The use of felt soled waders was strongly discouraged during the 07/08 season, and the ban should come as no surprise to most anglers.

Fish & Game New Zealand believes that banning the use of felt soles will immediately remove a high risk cause of spreading unwanted organisms like didymo among New Zealand's waterways. Anglers must still "Check, Clean and Dry" all equipment that has been in contact with the water wet before moving to a new waterway.

For more information:

Bryce Johnson

Chief Executive
Fish & Game New Zealand

28 July 2008

Athol Price Plaque

Opportunity was taken at a recent meeting of the NZSAA committee to present the Athol Price Plaque to Jerry van der Krogt.

Jerry was a worthy recipient of the Plaque which is awarded annually for outstanding service to the salmon fishery. Although the award was for the 2007-08 season, Jerry has for many years been a tireless volunteer particularly at Montrose.

Jerry said he was honoured to receive the Plaque but accepted it on behalf of all the other volunteers who put in so much work at Montrose and elsewhere in the interests of the salmon fishery.



*Jerry van der Krogt receiving the
Plaque from Athol Price*

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Montrose Open Day Sunday 13 July 2008

The Open Day was cancelled the previous Sunday because of snow in Christchurch. Interestingly, it turned out that the weather at Montrose was fine, no wind or rain and the roads dry. It was just the bits in between that were certainly a deterrent that weekend. Again on Sunday 13 July, the Rakaia Gorge turned on a fine day and many families and salmon supporters made the trip to Montrose for the annual Open Day hosted by Fish & Game.

It is always a family day and this year was no exception with dozens of children queuing up for a bucket of young salmon to release into the Montrose stream. Following this, the raceways were opened in two releases of the remaining salmon. In all, over 60,000 salmon were released to the stream and were last seen heading off downstream in shoals.



The bucket brigade

Opportunity was also available to view the hatching facility with the tanks of ova in various stages of hatching. Over 1,000,000 salmon eggs have been successfully fertilised over the past couple of months, the majority of which have been used for ova planting, with 120,000 ova kept for Montrose and another 120,000 ova that will be hatched and transferred to the McKinnons Creek hatchery in the lower Rangitata River.



*“A scoop of fish, and no chips, please!”
Steve Terry (F&G) and Dirk Barr*



Bye bye little salmon



First release of salmon from the raceway

The day would not be complete without the traditional sausage and onion with a dash of tomato sauce wrapped in piece of bread. The barbecue cooks and the ladies in the caravan on the bread-buttering chain did a great job - it was hard to believe that all those loaves and bags of sausages could disappear in such short time. Dish them up at home and they just don't taste the same as the outdoor variety.



Thanks are due to Fish & Game for hosting the Open Day, to Dirk Barr for his management of the release and to the volunteers who fed the multitude. It was a great day in the spectacular surroundings of the Rakaia Gorge.



The Changing of the Guard (at Montrose)

The name “Rusty” has for many years been synonymous with the Montrose salmon hatchery. Edgar Russ and a small dedicated core of volunteers have been responsible for the establishment, development and day to day running of the hatchery. From small beginnings, they set about reinstating the old commercial hatchery with little knowledge of raising salmon and with scant resources to undertake this project. The development has involved a lot of good old New Zealand No. 8 wire ingenuity coupled with some essential trade skills and sheer hard physical work. It has been a learning process, sourcing information of overseas experience and with valuable assistance from NZ King Salmon. Inevitably there have been successes and failures along the way but the Montrose facilities today are now much improved and hatchery operations running well.

After all these years of almost non-stop commitment to Montrose, Rusty has decided that the time is right for him to step down and with this in view he has been training his successor. Dirk Barr has now assumed the management role of Montrose under the auspices of Fish & Game. Dirk is a long-standing member and supporter of NZSAA, is an expert angler, and is well known on the Canterbury angling scene.



The Master and the Apprentice: Edgar (“Rusty”) Russ and Dirk Barr

We thank Rusty, along with his constant colleagues (Doug Roy in particular), for the dedication and hard work over these development years. We can't imagine Rusty sitting idle for long - no doubt he will be looking for another project to fire up his enthusiasm.

To Dirk, we know you will carry on the good work at Montrose and wish you success and enjoyment in your new role. What Dirk does need however is the support of NZSAA volunteers for regular and casual tasks at Montrose and we will be making a determined effort to provide more assistance.



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News from the Branches

Otago

More than 34,000 salmon smolt were pumped into Dunedin Harbour early in June. New Zealand Salmon Anglers Otago Association chairman, Wayne Olsen, said the 20cm-long, 75g fish were trucked in a tanker from the NIWA Silverstream Salmon Hatchery near Christchurch as part of the association's annual stocking of Otago Harbour.



Wayne Olsen

Wayne said the smolt would spend about a year in the harbour before swimming out to sea for another year where they would grow into "five-pounders". In an ideal year, up to 9% of them will come back to Otago Harbour, but we would be happy if 1%-2% return.

The salmon shipment cost \$35,000, which was raised by the association through several charitable trusts in Otago.

Annual salmon stocking began in Dunedin Harbour in 1982 and, since then, a vibrant recreational fishing resource had been created for Dunedin City.

Wayne said "There aren't too many other cities around the world that can say they have this resource. Vancouver [Canada] is the only other city in the world where you can get salmon in the harbour."

In a bid to help educate the community about the life cycle of salmon, 200 smolt from the truckload were given to the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre at Portobello for schoolchildren to observe.

These fish would also be released into the harbour within three months.

Source: Otago Daily Times 19 June 2008

South Canterbury

The Salmon Enhancement Trust opened the McKinnons Hatchery site for members of the public on 13 and 20 July 2008.

Approximately 60,000 smolt were released into the Rangitata River

Source: Timaru Herald

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Letters



**From Maurice Rodway, Manager
Southland Region Fish & Game NZ**

Release of Atlantic Salmon in Otago

An article by Gerald Frengley in the June newsletter has prompted a response from Maurice Rodway as follows:

“Gerald Frengley refers to Atlantic Salmon in the Waiau River in Southland. Gerald said ‘Salmon (Atlantic) easily adapted to the Waiau and ran to spawn in streams around Te Anau and Manapouri. The weir below Manapouri blocked their passage and the fishery collapsed — one cost of the Deep Cove project and another lost salmon run to economic progress’.

“This is not correct. There was no run of Atlantic Salmon in the Waiau River in the 1970’s when the weir was constructed. Atlantic Salmon were caught in the Waiau after they were established just after World War I. The earliest reliable records of Waiau Atlantic Salmon were in 1916. Note the earlier introduction to the other rivers mentioned in Gerald’s article all failed according to McDowall (1990).

“Atlantic Salmon were caught at the mouth of the Waiau in the early 1920’s and they were seen spawning in the Upukerora, a tributary of Lake Te Anau then as well.

“There was some debate as to whether a sea run population became established but the size and condition of most of the fish suggested they had only developed a landlocked population and this was principally in Lake Te Anau.

“By 1930 the salmon in the Waiau system were in “serious decline” . A fish trap on the Upukerora River was used to capture migrating salmon and strip their ova. It was estimated that four million ova were taken from this river and distributed to other parts of New Zealand—mostly to the Wanganui River. The transfer of ova from the Upukerora stopped altogether in 1945. Between 1930 and 1945 most of these went back into the Waiau system.

“Atlantic Salmon may still occur in Lake Te Anau however they are now very rare, if they exist at all. The last definite records were fish that lived in the upper reaches of the Eglinton River. The salmon of today are very hard to distinguish from thin Brown Trout.

“While the trapping and transfer of ova from the Upukerora River probably didn’t do the population of salmon in Lake Te Anau much good it is likely that other factors were responsible for their demise. There is an interesting negative relationship between the increase in abundance of rainbow trout in the lakes and the demise of salmon but there is no evidence to show rainbow trout were responsible for their eventual disappearance.

“Over the past ten years there has been a regular return of sea run Chinook Salmon into the Waiau. They mostly spawn in the Mararoa River after making their way through the fish pass in the Mararoa Weir. In 2007 we estimated about 100-200 fish spawned there but in 2008 the number would have been half this. Most of these salmon are 5-6 kg in size. There has also been a landlocked Chinook Salmon population developed mainly in Lake Manapouri. These fish also appear

to spawn in the Mararoa. The landlocked fish are regularly caught by boaties trolling on Lake Manapouri. At maturity they weigh 1.5-2 kg and are lovely plump fish.

“This landlocked population appears to have developed as a result of the power scheme. Now the Mararoa is essentially a tributary of Lake Manapouri whereas in the past it was a tributary of the Waiau. The placement of the Mararoa Weir was designed to capture its waters so they could be used by the power scheme on Lake Manapouri.

“So I’m afraid Gerald has painted an untrue picture regarding the salmon in the Waiau. The power scheme has had nothing to do with the demise of Atlantic Salmon there. In fact it appears to have allowed the development of a new salmon fishing in Lake Manapouri. And sea run salmon - albeit not that many of them - live in the Waiau and successfully negotiate the Mararoa Weir to reach spawning grounds in the Mararoa River.

“I agree with Gerald when he asks how we should measure progress — by money or pleasure. In the case of the Waiau and its salmon, there is a little bit of pleasure still available to the salmon angler and of course someone has made plenty of money out of the power scheme.”

Yours faithfully

Maurice Rodway

30 June 2008

*Reference: McDowall R M 1990
NZ Freshwater Fisheries
A Natural History & Guide
Heinemann Reed 553 pp*

Editor’s Note: Thanks Maurice for setting the record straight and sharing this information with our readers.



From Graham Sullivan, Biosecurity Manager, Environment Canterbury

Rabbit Control in Riverbeds

Environment Canterbury has responded to NZSAA’s concerns regarding the use of 1080 on riverbeds, as follows:

“I wish to clarify two points:

First, Environment Canterbury does not undertake rabbit control operations. The responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2005 for a range of plant and animal pests rests with the land occupier. Land occupiers either undertake the work themselves or alternatively a contractor for this purpose on a user pays basis. In this instance, Land Information NZ, as the Crown agency responsible for unalienated Crown land, has engaged a contractor to plan and initiate a rabbit control programme on several riverbeds in the Canterbury region.

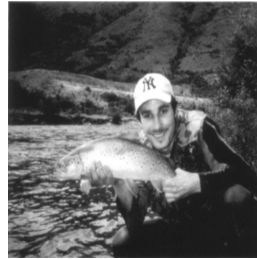
“Second, neither myself as Biosecurity Manager nor the Biosecurity section is involved directly or indirectly in any approval process in relation to the use of 1080. A consent is required from ECan, albeit by a section specifically tasked with processing consent applications, for the discharge of a contaminant, which includes 1080, to a bed of river. Decisions on such applications are based on the requirements of any relevant regional plan and the Resource Management Act.

“Approval for the aerial distribution of 1080 impregnated bait must also be

(Continued on page 20)

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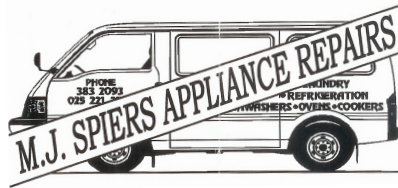
All baches self-contained with pots/pans, cutlery, power, shower, fridge, washing machine and freezer (except Kaniere, no freezer). All baches sleep 8 people.

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obtained from the Medical Officer of Health and the requirements of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 must also be adhered to.

“Consent approval, where given, is subject to conditions to ensure the statutory obligations of both agencies are met. Conditions, for example, will include minimum distances 1080 impregnated bait can be laid from rivers and around water intakes for stock or human drinking water. Conditions are independently monitored during and after the operation.

“The proposed rabbit control work on riverbeds this year, to which your letter refers to specifically, also includes adjacent farm land. The scale, accessibility and topography of the land to be controlled limit the options of bait distribution to aerial application only. 1080 is the only toxin approved by the Environmental Risk Management Agency for rabbit control by aerial distribution available to appropriately certified contractors.

“The timing of 1080 carrot programmes is limited to late autumn and winter when the acceptance of carrot as food by feral rabbits is at a maximum and therefore the impact of control is also at a maximum.

“Regulations and approval conditions are designed to protect humans, human activities and the environment which includes water quality. These requirements ensure river ecology will not be compromised by rabbit control.”

Yours faithfully
Graham Sullivan
23 June 2008

Changes to Environment Canterbury River Report Phone Line

The Canterbury River Report 24 hour info phone line, administered by Environment Canterbury, is changing to an 0900 number.

The old river report phone line, which has helped people get updated information on floods, river flows and irrigation restrictions for the past 12 years, is based on old software and equipment that can no longer be reliably maintained.

The new line, 0900 74837 (RIVER) becomes active on August 1.

The old line cost 12 cents per minute while the new line is now 50 cents per minute. The new rate covers Telecom's costs. Environment Canterbury says it does not benefit financially from the river and flood phone service.

The old line - 083 225522 - will have a new message placed on August 1 informing users of the change. The old number will still be active only for flood alerts until November this year.

For people who are able to access a website, the river, rainfall, flood and irrigation information, recorded on the phone service twice daily and more during floods, is available via the Environment Canterbury website at www.ecan.govt.nz/riverreport

There is also a text messaging service for river information. See also www.ecan.govt.nz/riverreport

Stickers and other information on the River Report 24 hour phone line are available on request, contact 0800 EC INFO (324-636).



From Overseas

From Farmers' Friends to Fisherman's Foes

Anna Mehler Paperny, VANCOUVER

A continent away from their native waters, disoriented and out of captivity for the first time in their lives, 30,000-odd Atlantic salmon are roaming free off the British Columbia coast.

Their mass exodus from a pen at Marine Harvest Canada's Frederick Arm site on July 1 is B.C.'s largest farmed-salmon escape in eight years. It has spawned a government investigation, with Environment Ministry conservation officers combing the site to find out exactly what went wrong.

"They're out, they're free, they'll be mingling," said Raincoast Research biologist Alexandra Morton. And it doesn't bode well for wild Pacific salmon. The Atlantic salmon are "big, silly animals" who lack much of the instinct driving wild salmon's life cycles, Ms. Morton said. "They do have instincts to feed, though, and that's what they're bred for, is to be voracious feeders."

These appetites can take a bite out of wild salmon's precious food supply - or they can gobble up vulnerable young salmon. It's also possible the farmed salmon, although two years away from sexual maturity, will follow spawning Pacific salmon into rivers off the coast.

"[The rivers are] full of our little fry and smolts - they would simply start eating our young fish," she said. "You don't know whether they're going to follow other spawning salmon into the rivers."

Ms. Morton said farmed Atlantic salmon can learn to feed themselves and survive in the wild in three to four weeks, and can throw "a wrench in the gears" of wild salmon, whose numbers have dwindled drastically in recent years. Rivers in the Pacific are becoming more and more depleted, and that makes them more vulnerable to colonization [by other species]. There's only one species of salmon in the Atlantic, whereas there's five in the Pacific, so that tells you they don't really play well with others.

Although resources and space are relatively abundant in the open oceans, things get dicey when freed Atlantic salmon get into rivers and compete with indigenous salmon for habitat and food. Competition becomes particularly fierce with steelhead. The steelhead is the Pacific species most closely related to its Atlantic cousin, and both favour "riffled" spawning grounds, where swift-running shallow streams ripple over rocks.

Sport fishermen have caught Atlantic salmon in spawning rivers that have visible bite marks and sores on them from their skirmishes with steelhead, and the interlopers give as good as they get.

Ms. Morton thinks farmed Atlantic salmon are regularly escaping from farm nets. She would like to see gill-netters paid to fish solely for escaped Atlantic salmon in the areas near the farms, using wide-weave nets designed to tangle the more docile farmed salmon while letting the wild salmon go.

She has one answer for how to prevent this from happening again: "Closed-containment. That solves everything."

Sick Salmon

Los Angeles Times reporter Ken Weiss

The Alaskan King Salmon fishery has long been the poster child for proper fisheries management, but, lately, salmon swimming the Yukon River face a threat much broader than overfishing: global warming about rising river temperatures and "ich," the parasite that's infecting vast numbers of salmon.

White Spot Disease is killing vast numbers of salmon along Alaska's Yukon River. White Spot is caused by a parasite – appropriately named – "Ich". Ich eats away at the internal organs and flesh of the fish. In some places along the Yukon River 30 percent of the salmon catch is infected with Ich.

The traditional fishermen, Native Americans, who live along the river found little white pimples on the hearts of these salmon that then spreads to the flesh and makes them smell a bit like rotting fruit. And that has become a real problem because they like to dry their fish in smokehouses and the whole batch can get tainted. They say it's almost always the biggest and best looking fish, generally those large females that are carrying a lot of eggs needed to reproduce for successive generations. And they end up throwing away as much as 30 percent of their catch, feeding much of it to their dogs.

The fishermen first started noticing Ich in the late 1980's. Richard Kocan a fish disease specialist at the University of Washington and his students started ruling out every possible reason that this disease was emerging and the only thing they found was it correlated with warmer water in the Yukon River. And the Yukon River's water has been warming with an

earlier break up of ice and particularly it has been warming earlier in the season, in June. That's when these Chinook salmon start their long migration to the headwaters about 2,000 miles away.

So the assumption is that global warming is heating the Yukon River and causing this parasite to grow and thrive and killing the salmon.

Kocan views *Ichthyophonus* as a classic emerging disease. He pointed out that salmon, a lucrative catch, had been scrutinized by scientists and fishermen for decades, and the disease had never before been reported. In the last decade, it has shown up in salmon on the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Taku rivers in Alaska and on various rivers in British Columbia and Russia. It has also been detected in recent years in rockfish and smaller non commercial fish in Puget Sound and elsewhere off the coasts of Oregon and Washington, and in freshwater trout on Idaho farms.

It's the kind of redistribution of disease that can be expected with climate change, Kocan said: "Everything is getting warmer, and that's how climate change is going to redistribute all kinds of disease. Parasites have their optimum conditions - upper and lower limits. We'll notice where they show up but not necessarily where they disappear."

Ichthyophonus is among a class of ancient parasitic microbes that can move fast, taking advantage of new niches using age-old tricks that have kept them around for billions of years.

What, if anything, can be done to help these fish?

One thing that is an obvious²² implication for this research is to cut back on how

many fish are taken through the commercial fishery. The commercial fisheries where they get the prized Alaskan salmon, are usually down at the mouths of these rivers, where the fish just start to swim upstream. Now those fish, in the Yukon for instance, are infected with this parasite but the disease has not progressed. As the fish swim up the river, in warmer water, the disease progresses, and the idea is, if Doctor Kocan is right that some of these fish are dying on the way up to their spawning grounds, that you need to cut back on the catch to compensate for that.

Besides supporting fishermen, salmon are a keystone species in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, supporting wildlife from birds to bears and orcas. A crash could cripple dependent creatures.

Mary Ruckelshaus, a federal biologist with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, has been running climate models to peer into the future for Pacific Northwest salmon. Those models predict that salmon will become extinct without aggressive efforts to preserve the clear, cool streams needed for spawning, such as planting trees to shade streams and curtailing the amount of water siphoned off by farmers.

"It's sort of a time bomb," Ruckelshaus said. If people don't have a plan for it, it can be disastrous when it hits."

Her models didn't factor in the potential for emerging diseases, such as the *Ichthyophonus* ("Ich") that her former professor, Kocan, has been studying.

Source:

CORANZ Newswatch 20 June 2008

Extracts from Articles by Ken Weiss, Los Angeles Times and Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council



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