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Morton applies for expired salmon feedlot licenses

Salmon Feedlots in the Broughton Archipelago are operating on Crown Land tenures that have been expired for years, says biologist Alexandra Morton.

In late August, Morton applied for expired licences in order to 'return them to their natural state to grow wild fish to the much greater benefit of British Columbians and the BC economy'.

Crown Land is public land that the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) leases to people and companies. MAL is also in charge of regulating the salmon feedlots.

'I don't know how these foreign companies can be in full production for years on expired tenures, but these sites are the fishiest places in the Broughton where we once found the highest concentrations of herring, salmon, prawns and other species,' says biologist Alexandra Morton, 'I have made detailed application to MAL to use these sites for what they have done so well for 8,000 years—grow wild fish to the benefit of the people, the economy and future generations who might appreciate the food security in the years to come.'

Morton's applications recognize how the natural architecture of the sites perform to produce up-wellings, tide lines and back eddies that attract and feed valuable public fisheries, including prawns, rock cod, wild salmon, herring and other species. Some of the salmon feedlots violate provincial aquaculture-free zones. She writes in the applications:

'I offer that my intended use better serves Crown Land's mission statement 'to provide the greatest benefits for British Columbians.'

'The salmon feedlots had 'Licences of Occupation,' which are a lesser form of tenure and are not surveyed, considered short term, non-exclusive, non-registerable and intended for only 'minimum improvements.'

'A disturbing lawlessness surrounds this industry, they post 'no trespassing' signs on non-exclusive leases that

they let expire. On April 1, 2010 they slammed the door on government inspection for disease, while their pathogens free-flow into our richest fish habitat. This industry was unlawfully given to the province to manage, and it appears to let these companies do whatever they want. Privatizing ocean spaces and owning fish in the ocean is unconstitutional in Canada; is that why the leases have not been renewed?' asks Morton, 'It is time we find out what is the relationship between this Norwegian industry and all levels of our government.'

'The Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council fully supports Alexandra securing these leases for safe-keeping as a means to preserve wild salmon stocks and the integrity of our eco-system. We look forward to working side-by-side with her on this,' states Chief Bob Chamberlin.

Morton thinks people in Nootka Sound, Port Hardy, Discovery Islands and Clayoquot Sound should also look into whether those leases are expired. Contact 'Front Counter BC,' she suggests.

'Bottom line is: wild fish belong to us and if we don't take a stand and look after them ourselves no one else is going to,' says Morton, 'there are a lot of rotten politics around this. I hope this year's legendary sockeye return reminds people of just how valuable wild fish are to us.' ✍

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