



**'NAMGIS**  
FIRST NATION

---

18 05 08

NEWS RELEASE

**DFO STUDY CONFIRMS NEED FOR FEDERAL ACTION TO PROTECT WILD SALMON FROM LETHAL PRV**

ALERT BAY, BC - The 'Namgis First Nation says the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) must act on a new study by DFO scientists that proves the *Piscine orthoreovirus* (PRV) is a risk to vulnerable populations of wild salmon.

The peer-reviewed paper published by 10 scientists, six of them from DFO, concludes that the PRV-1 strain of the virus causes red blood cells in Pacific salmon to rupture, spreading toxins that damage the kidney and liver and kill wild salmon. PRV also causes heart and skeletal muscle inflammation in Atlantic salmon. The new paper provides evidence that Atlantic salmon are better adapted to PRV and Pacific salmon, and chinook in particular, are more vulnerable to PRV infection. This evidence suggests that Atlantic salmon are the natural host for the PRV virus.

"The finding that Pacific salmon, and Chinook, in particular are more likely to suffer harm from PRV is alarming," said Chief Don Svanvik. "Fish farms up and down the coast are spewing this lethal virus along migration routes of endangered and threatened species of wild Pacific salmon. But DFO does not seem to care."

In 2015, Federal Court found that the Minister must test for PRV before issuing licences to fish farms to transfer smolts to open-net pens. Despite evidence that open-net pens are the main source PRV, the Minister has ignored that ruling and continues to issue licences without testing for PRV.

"The Minister has ignored the science, the law and our repeated communications. Nothing seems to make DFO pause and consider the risks," said Chief Svanvik. "That is why 'Namgis went to court – to have the Minister follow the law."

On March 6, 2018, 'Namgis applied for judicial review of DFO's policy not to test for PRV. It also applied for an injunction to prevent the transfer of smolts into the Swanson Island fish farm without testing for PRV. On March 23, the court found that transferring smolts into Swanson Island without testing for PRV could cause irreparable harm to wild salmon and 'Namgis' constitutionally protected rights. The court did not grant the injunction due to the financial costs doing so might cause Marine Harvest. A draft of the new paper since provided to 'Namgis shows it was also submitted for publication on March 23. On the very same day, March 23, despite the court's finding of irreparable harm, and DFO's own evidence of harm to wild Pacific salmon, DFO issued a licence to transfer smolts into the Swanson Island fish farm without testing for PRV.

"DFO's conduct is shocking and appalling. DFO re-affirmed its policy not to test for PRV on March 5, 2018. That update did not even consider this new evidence, which DFO would have already had," said Chief Svanvik. "We were in court on March 20 and 21 trying to protect wild salmon against PRV. That whole time, DFO stood arm-in-arm with Marine Harvest saying PRV posed no risk to wild salmon. Meanwhile DFO had the best, cutting edge, science that proved just the opposite. It never put that evidence before the court. It is hard to have any faith in the Minister. Clearly, the law, the science and the honour of the Crown mean nothing to him."

'Namgis' application for judicial review of DFO's policy not to test for PRV, and the licence to transfer salmon smolts into Swanson Island will be heard during the week of September 10, 2018.

The 'Namgis First Nation has invested substantial resources to restore and protect wild salmon, and pioneered land-based salmon farming as a sustainable alternative to open net pens, and this new industry is now expanding rapidly around the world. 'Namgis have demonstrated that the environment does not need to be sacrificed for economic benefits, and they call on the Minister to take a similarly inclusive view of his own department's mandate.

**CONTACT:**

Chief Don Svanvik  
'Namgis First Nation  
1-250-974-4552