

## **Call for salmon review derided by local MLA**

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The federal government should review why the forecast for sockeye salmon was so far off the mark, B.C. Environment Minister Barry Penner told Canwest News on Friday.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans had predicted that 10.5 million sockeye would return for the year -- more than seven times the actual number returning.

The call for a review comes as commercial gillnet fishermen demanded a judicial inquiry into the state of the Fraser River salmon fishery.

Penner said the low return has been a "huge disappointment."

"This isn't the first time that the forecast has missed the mark," he said.

He said the review should examine the causes of the disparity, forecasting techniques and limitations, and improvements.

But Penner's response didn't sit well with MLA Michael Sather.

"This call is a weak response from a government that claimed one of its Five Great Goals was the best fisheries management in the world, bar none," said Sather in a news release. "What does the minister mean by a public review, who will conduct it and when?" he added.

"It is interesting to note that, even though the Fraser River sockeye run was very poor overall, the Harrison River run was strong," said Sather. "Unlike the outmigration of juveniles of other Fraser River sockeye, which go north from the mouth of the Fraser, the Harrison run goes to sea via the Strait of Juan de Fuca, where there are no fish farms. The B.C. Liberals have been extremely loathe to regulate the fish farm industry, who contribute significantly to their party."

Penner said the wrong forecast gives first nations peoples a

false impression that they'll have a large food source. And commercial and recreational anglers gear up for what turns out of be a lacklustre season, he said.

Penner said Fisheries and Oceans Minister Gail Shea hasn't formally responded but has expressed support for a review.

Bob McKamey, a representative of gillnet fishermen who requested the judicial inquiry, said, "This is the third year of disastrous sockeye returns."

He accused Fisheries and Oceans Canada of "epic mismanagement of Fraser River sockeye, which has been regularly covered up. It is long past time we got some honest answers. We don't have time to watch four more years of compromise and ass-covering from here to Ottawa," he said.

During the 2006 election campaign, Harper promised a judicial inquiry into the Fraser River fishery when he visited B.C. McKamey said the DFO and other fishing interests had "fought hard against a judicial inquiry."

"It's no longer about who gets to fish. It's about the survival of Fraser River salmon," he said.

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