

# Biologist wants inquiry on salmon stocks

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BY ROBERT BARRON, DAILY NEWS  
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Biologist Alexandra Morton wants to see a full judicial inquiry by the federal government into the reasons for the collapse of the sockeye salmon run on the Fraser River this year.

Her call for the inquiry comes on the heels of the challenge by B.C. Environment Minister Barry Penner calling for a public review of the "adequacy" of the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's forecasting abilities after just 1.37 million sockeye returned to the river this year, way down from the 10.6 million that DFO projected.

Morton, who lives in Broughton Archipelago off of northern Vancouver Island, has been warning authorities for years that sea lice from the 29 open-net fish farms in the archipelago are decimating wild salmon populations in the area. She said it may be a fact that sea lice from fish farms may not be the whole reason for the collapse for the sockeye run on the Fraser River, but she's frustrated that a number of senior DFO and government officials have already dismissed the contribution of sea lice to the collapse without the proper research to support that conclusion.

Officials from DFO couldn't be reached by press time.

"I want DFO to say that they'll turn over every stone in finding the reasons for the collapse of that run and I want everyone appearing at a judicial inquiry to be put under oath because there's a lot of untruths out there on this issue that need to be cleared up," she said.

Penner said a public probe is needed to restore confidence in DFO's management of the west coast fishery.

"The wide disparity between the forecast and actual returns of Fraser River sockeye is a serious issue for British Columbians," Penner said in a letter to federal Fisheries Minister Gail Shea.

In reply, Shea said she accepts the need for a review, although she did not commit to a public forum.

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