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Who's looking after sockeye?

British Columbians know by now that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans enormously over-estimated this year's return of Fraser River sockeye. It is now believed to be the lowest return since 1952.

So what happened? Why are predictions so out of touch with reality?

As Sun columnist Stephen Hume has pointed out, juvenile sockeye surveys in the Strait of Georgia in 2007 led scientists from the DFO's working group to warn that sockeye returns in 2009 "may be extremely poor." Somehow, this important finding appears not to have been factored into the optimistic forecast.

So who dropped the ball, and why? Will anyone be held accountable? And do we have the will to fix the problems? Shouldn't we be a tad concerned that the London-based Marine Stewardship Council is recommending eco-certification of the Fraser sockeye fishery? We also learned that the very same provincial government that just registered the largest deficit budget in B.C.'s history saw fit to spend more than $600,000 lobbying the MSC to award such a questionable rating.

Something is seriously wrong with this picture. Our salmon and our citizens deserve some answers.

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