



10 August 2010

Rick Ramsay
Mt Cook Alpine Salmon Ltd
PO Box 67
Twizel 7944

Dear Rick,

You have asked for a statement from Central South Island Fish and Game on the effects of your salmon farm on the sports fishery of the Tekapo-Pukaki Canal. This is an easy assignment as the benefits have been significant and the only downside to date being the extra compliance work required for a major new fishery.

Trout were present in the Tekapo-Pukaki canal in large numbers prior to salmon farm development. Trout density was high at approximately 350 fish per kilometer of which about 80% were in the 20 to 40 cm size range and of about 0.5 kg average weight. Despite the abundance of trout, anglers shunned the canal as fish were of uniformly poor condition due to lack of food. The canal did not support a self-sustaining fishery rather it was supplemented by diversion of trout from Lake Tekapo and once diverted, fish were condemned to remain there unless they took their chances through Tekapo B power station turbines. This situation led to an over-stocked fishery where lack of food produced small and poor condition trout, and perpetual one-way migration of fish into the canal from upstream maintained an oversupply.

Advent of the Mt Cook alpine salmon farm significantly changed that situation by providing a supply of food made to a recipe for growing salmonids at their maximum rate. We believe the average size of fish caught by anglers in the Tekapo-Pukaki Canal over the last 10 years to be about 3 kg and fish of up to 6kg are caught almost daily. The largest trout known to have been caught in either the Tekapo-Pukaki or Ohau Canal is an 18 kg rainbow.

Angling became more popular in the canal as the trout gained condition and size. During the 1994/95 fishing season it was estimated that approximately 900 days of angling effort was sustained on the Tekapo-Pukaki Canal. In recent years that figure has increased to between 4,000 and 7,000 days annually.

At some point the harvest of fish by anglers will match either the rate of recruitment of small fish from Lake Tekapo or the number of wild fish able to be sustained as a by-product of salmon farm operation. In the last two seasons anglers have suggested that the canal fishery is being over-fished and that too many fish are being caught. Fish and Game intends to implement a project to determine if productivity of the canal is being limited by excessive fishing pressure or whether the fishery could be further enhanced by supplementary releases of juvenile trout in addition to natural recruitment.

These are good management problems to have - they indicate healthy and well utilised fisheries. They would never have been considered prior to salmon farming on the canal.

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, game birds and their habitats

Central South Island Region

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www.fishandgame.org.nz

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'mwebb', is positioned below the typed name.

Mark Webb
Fish and Game Officer
For Chief Executive