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PACIFIC NORTHWEST LNG ASSESSMENT UNDERESTIMATED RISKS TO SALMON, STUDY CLAIMS

Scientific study challenges whether risk to juvenile salmon was properly known but Ottawa stands by decision. Federal approval of a controversial liquefied natural gas export terminal on British Columbia's North Coast underestimated impacts on juvenile wild salmon, according to a new scientific study published today. The study looked at how migrating salmon use the Skeena River estuary, including a sandy area with eelgrass beds called Flora Bank, near Lelu Island where Petronas-backed Pacific NorthWest LNG plans to build an \$11-billion export terminal. Using chemical markers, the authors found juvenile salmon are eating and growing in the estuary for days to weeks, making it more of a nursery than just a migration route. "Salmon were not just passing through. They were rearing for an extended period of time," said lead author and Simon Fraser University professor Jonathan Moore. "Alteration of this habitat has greater risks to salmon

populations than assumed in the environmental assessment," the paper states in the peer-reviewed journal, Marine Ecology Progress Series. Flora Bank has long been recognized as important habitat for salmon in the Skeena watershed, which is the second-largest salmon-bearing river in Canada. Indigenous groups, environmentalists and scientists all raised the risk to juvenile salmon as a concern during the environmental assessment process into the Pacific NorthWest LNG terminal's construction, prior to Canada approving the project in September. But Moore said there wasn't scientific evidence on exactly how juvenile salmon use the habitat, a tricky question because they're migrating and too small to tag. So, he and colleagues used stable isotopes — which he calls "naturally-occurring tracers" — to see how long the tiny fish had been living and eating in the estuary. The estuary waters have a different chemical signature for carbon and sulfur than the freshwater from where the salmon were migrating, said Moore. By sampling more than 400 fish from Flora Bank and surrounding areas, the scientists were able to gather a picture of how

long each salmon species spent there, using the stable isotope levels as a sort of clock. Chinook spent the longest median time — with half staying at least 26 days and some staying almost two months. Coho, pink, and sockeye were also tracked, with juveniles spending days to weeks there. That makes the area a key nursery for the watershed, vulnerable to industrial impacts, he said. "What happens in this little location could affect salmon from throughout the Skeena," said Moore. Moore hopes the research could still influence the fate — or location — of the Pacific NorthWest LNG project, despite the government's approval with conditions this fall. "Pacific NorthWest LNG hasn't been built yet, and so I think there's an opportunity to get it right," he said. "In terms of risks to salmon ... this is the worst place possible." The federal government, however, does not plan to reconsider its approval, it said in a statement. "The Government of Canada stands by its decision on the Pacific NorthWest LNG Project," the statement from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency reads. It said that decision was based on a "thorough science-based review

... including material developed by Dr. Moore," as well as input from Indigenous groups, the public and federal agencies. The agency said it recognized the Skeena River estuary and Flora Bank eelgrass beds as especially important for juvenile salmon, but with mitigation efforts "the project is not likely to cause significant adverse effects to marine fish and fish habitat." That assessment, however, is still being challenged in the courts, with lawsuits filed by Indigenous groups and environmentalists in Vancouver last month. Among the claims, filed by Skeena Wild Conservation Trust, is a request to quash the environmental assessment and approval, saying the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency "abdicate[d] its duty" to assess the project's likelihood to harm fish and fish habitat. The Canadian government says it will respond to those claims through the court process.



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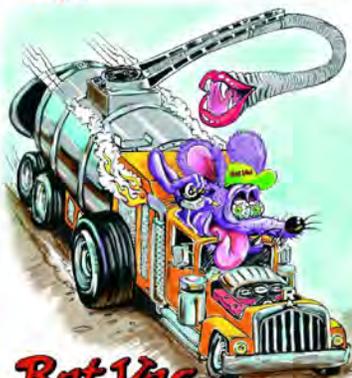


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been idled since wildfires swept through the Fort McMurray area in May. The company said in August that the demonstration project would remain idle until benchmark oil prices rose above US \$50 a barrel. Japex said Tuesday it's still evaluating the best time to restart production.

MITCH MCCONNELL URGES DONALD TRUMP TO MOVE FAST TO APPROVE KEYSTONE XL

Top Republican asks president-elect to make pipeline one of his top priorities

The top Republican in the U.S. Senate says he asked president-elect Donald Trump to move swiftly in approving construction of the Keystone XL pipeline that would allow Calgary-based TransCanada Corp. to ship bitumen from Alberta's oilsands to U.S. Gulf Coast refineries. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky told reporters on Friday that he made the request during his Capitol Hill meeting with Trump a day earlier.

President Barack Obama had vetoed legislation that would have moved ahead with construction of the pipeline projected to carry 800,000 barrels a day of crude from Alberta and North Dakota to Nebraska, where existing pipelines would bring the oil to Gulf Coast refineries. Environmentalists had opposed the project, but the prospect of an all-Republican U.S. government next year boosts the chances for Keystone. Since Trump won the presidential election on Tuesday, some including interim Conservative

Leader Rona Ambrose have urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to push for Keystone's approval. TransCanada (TSX:TRP) said earlier this week that it wants to engage with the Trump administration on Keystone's benefits and it remains fully committed to the 1,900-kilometre pipeline.

JACOS ESTIMATES 20 PER CENT COST INCREASE OF HANGINGSTONE OILSANDS

Startup of the expansion project remains scheduled for the middle of next year

Japan Canada Oil Sands Ltd. is increasing its cost estimate for the Hangingstone oilsands expansion project in Alberta by about 20 per cent. The project is a joint venture between JACOS, which is owned by a consortium of Japanese companies, and Calgary-based

Nexen Inc. (TSX:NXN). The parent company of JACOS says its portion of the expansion southwest of Fort McMurray is now expected to cost \$1.5 billion, up from the previous estimate of \$1.25 billion. Startup of the expansion project remains scheduled for the middle of next year. As of September, it was about 96 per cent complete. The total cost of the Hangingstone expansion, including Nexen's share, has been estimated at \$1.8 billion.

Nexen hasn't announced a revision to its cost estimate. The Hangingstone expansion project is beside a smaller demonstration operation that has

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