



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2009

More than 20% of the World's Salmon at Risk

National Geographic Magazine reveals more than 20% of the world's wild salmon population at risk on Russia's remote Kamchatka Peninsula

Russia's Kamchatka salmon fishery is one of the most productive globally, providing at least twenty percent of the world's wild Pacific salmon. Poaching is prolific throughout the peninsula and the rich marine waters that surround it. Anatoly Dekshstein, Coordinator of the World Wildlife Fund's Marine Program on Kamchatka noted that, "We estimate the annual illegal salmon catch at 55,000 tons – more than double the legal salmon harvest in Canada." Corruption, depressed local economies, and a constantly changing management framework are some of the root causes for the region's poaching epidemic.

The article in the August issue of National Geographic, reaching 35 million readers worldwide, reveals that for Kamchatka to remain the world's foremost salmon fishery, "its rivers don't need to be restored; they need only to be protected from poaching, overcatch, oil and gas development, disruptive and poisonous mining, and other forms of shortsighted mistakes." The article states that the lack of adequate protection and effective management will lead to permanent salmon declines that are not recoverable. Salmon are an important keystone species for natural ecosystems supporting bears, eagles, and scores of other wildlife and provide the foundation of the region's economy and social well-being.

"The window of opportunity to save one of the last viable wild salmon strongholds on the planet is closing," says Guido Rahr, President of the Wild Salmon Center (WSC), an NGO dedicated to conserving salmon across the Pacific Rim. Together with local partners, WSC is working with Kamchatka's government to create a network of reserves to safeguard entire salmon watersheds, from the headwaters to the ocean.

Other groups such as WWF have demonstrated that poaching can be reduced to near zero in model areas through support for anti-poaching brigades. Both WWF and WSC are working to promote sustainable fishing practices through market based incentives such as Marine Stewardship Council certification and by leveraging international seafood buyers' interest in sustainable sources of wild Pacific salmon.

For photographs and video footage go to:

<http://ftp.nationalgeographic.com/pressroom/tempsource/1/ngm/salmon-video/>

(username and password: press)

To schedule interviews with the National Geographic author or photographer and for more information about conservation activities in Kamchatka, contact:

National Geographic Magazine, U.S., Beth Foster, 202-557-9815, befoster@ngs.org, ngs.org

National Geographic Magazine, Russia, +7 495 232 32 00

Wild Salmon Center, David Finkel, 971-255-5568, dfinkel@wildsalmoncenter.org, wildsalmoncenter.org

World Wildlife Fund, Russia, Alexander Filatkina, Kamchatka/Bering Sea Ecoregion, +7 415-241-1945, afilatkina@wwf.ru, wwf.ru

World Wildlife Fund, U.S., Lee Poston, 202-299-6442, lee.poston@wwfus.org, wwfus.org