

Geo-engineering guru misled Haida corporation on ocean fertilization: documents

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By Dene Moore, Canadian Press February 25, 2014



President of the Haida Salmon Restoration Corp. John Disney addresses media during a news conference at the Vancouver Aquarium in Vancouver, Friday, Oct. 19, 2012.

Photograph by: Jonathan Hayward , CP

VANCOUVER - An American businessman involved in a controversial ocean fertilization experiment off the British Columbia coast misled his Canadian partners about his credentials and is essentially holding the scientific experiment hostage, the man's estranged partners allege in court documents.

Russ George launched a civil lawsuit last month against the Haida Salmon Restoration Corp. and others involved in the controversial experiment, which saw 100 metric tonnes of iron dust dumped into the Pacific in July 2012 in the belief it would feed salmon and capture carbon.

George's suit claimed he was wrongly "frozen out" of the venture and subjected to "false, defamatory and malicious" accusation by his former partners.

But the corporation filed a response this week in B.C. Supreme Court, alleging George made false and misleading claims to persuade the company to proceed with the experiment. The document said George contributed little and did not have the expertise he claimed.

"During the ocean voyage and ship preparations, Mr. George exhibited a tendency to behave in a manner that was irrational, unprofessional and offensive to others, and engaged in certain inappropriate conduct including a physical assault upon the

project leader, which resulted in the early termination of the voyage," the 21-page document alleged.

George and his company, Ocean Pastures Corp., "simply did not possess the technology and know-how that they had previously represented to (Haida Salmon) they possessed," said the court document.

Once the experiment came to light in the media, George made "public statements that were false, exaggerated, embarrassing or otherwise inappropriate," the Haida corporation said in its court filing.

The response alleged George removed equipment and data from the company's shuttered office.

The documents also alleged George failed to disclose a conflict of interest, because he held shares in Haida Salmon Restoration and owned a company the corporation was negotiating with.

George is a controversial figure in the world of so-called climate geo-engineering, and the experiment, which took place in the Pacific Ocean near the Haida Gwaii islands, was not the first time he has run into opposition.

The iron dust was dumped into the ocean in the belief it would cause a phytoplankton bloom, which in turn would feed salmon and act as a natural sponge to capture carbon from the atmosphere.

The practice is unproven. International scientists condemned the unsanctioned experiment, and the federal environment minister announced an investigation into what he called "rogue science."

Jason McNamee, a director of Haida Salmon Restoration, said data was gathered before and after the experiment that could offer important scientific insight.

The court file says Haida Salmon has no employees and its liabilities outstrip its assets by millions of dollars, but McNamee said the corporation is not bankrupt and the science can continue.

Haida Salmon had, in fact, negotiated a carbon offset sale to a company called Blue Carbon, according to court documents, but that deal was derailed by George's lawsuit.

"Until these legal issues are cleared up, there's really not much of a path forward," he said. "We have a wealth of knowledge and information that I think to be globally helpful, but until this is resolved we simply can't do that."