

October 16, 2012

To the editors of the Guardian

“The Rogue Geoengineer”

We are writing to emphasize issues raised by The Guardian report on October 15 that 100 tonnes of iron had been dumped into the ocean off the west coast of Canada with the intention of stimulation of phytoplankton growth, as part of a salmon restoration project supported by local Haida Nation villagers. As noted in that article, this appears to have violated the UN Convention on Biodiversity moratorium on geoengineering and the London Convention moratorium on ocean iron fertilization except for vetted research purposes- both of which Canada is a party to.

The Guardian should also make clear why they believe the ocean colour image shown in the article demonstrates an enhancement of phytoplankton caused by iron fertilization. Determining the local effects of iron fertilization against the background of natural variations is difficult, and impacts on fisheries, ocean biota, and carbon cycling harder still. More broadly, the involvement of experts is essential so that experiments are conducted with the highest standards and the results withstand the rigors of peer reviewed publication. In that context, reputable researchers such as the members of the In-Situ Iron Studies Consortium (ISIS) have developed principles for scientific conduct that were not followed in this case (isisconsortium.org). We emphasize that great gains in ocean understanding can come from deliberate fertilizations while taking care to avoid unwarranted risks and to ensure open evaluation of experiments.

Sincerely,

Ken Buesseler, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, USA

Richard Lampitt, National Oceanography Centre, UK

and members of the ISIS Consortium [Steering Committee](#)

Original Guardian article at:

<http://m.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/oct/15/pacific-iron-fertilisation-geoengineering?cat=environment&type=article>