

APPLE ANNIE'S ORCHARD • YUKON'S BIG BUN

CANADIAN Geographic

SEA OF SALMON

How safe are
farmed fish?

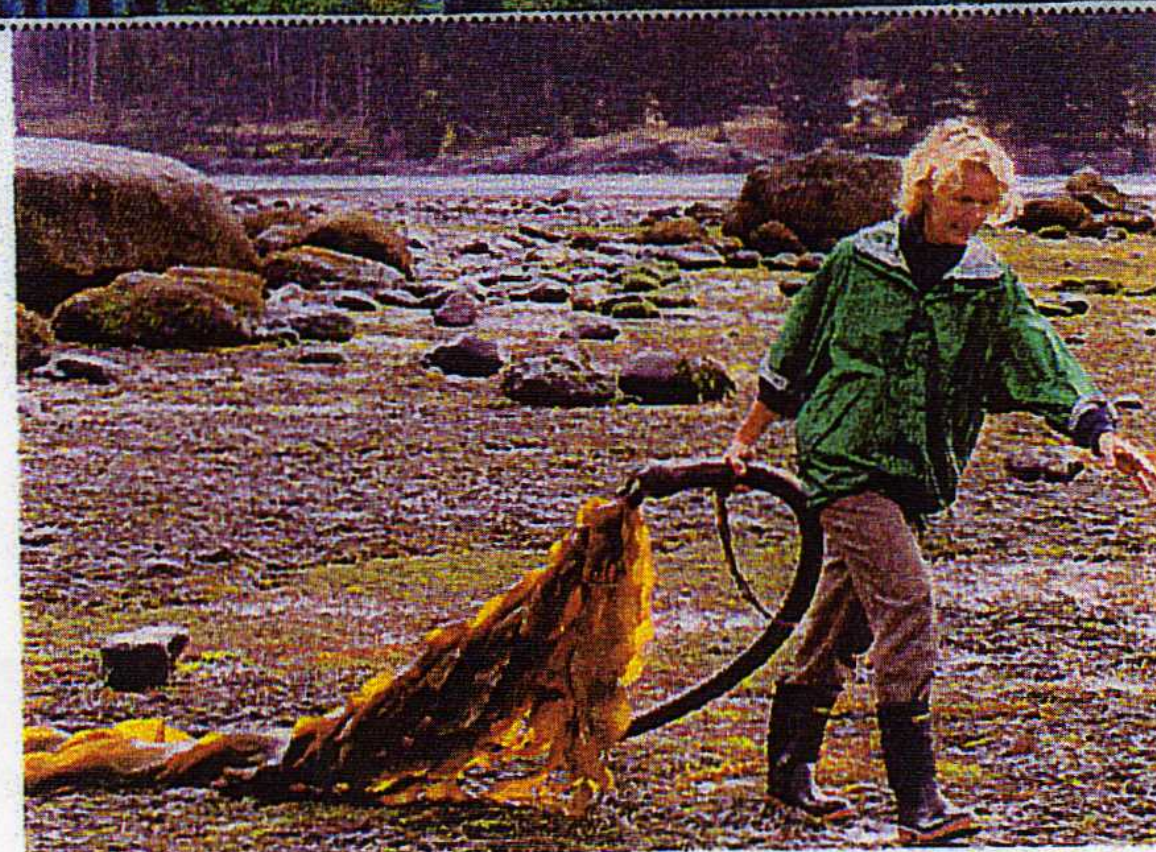
SHE SELLS SEAWEED

INDUSTRY

WHEN DIANE BERNARD led her business-suited sales team into the boardroom at British Columbia's Four Seasons Resort Whistler in early June, she opened her black executive briefcase to display not flow charts but fresh seaweed — dripping and redolent of the Juan de Fuca Strait.

Bernard (RIGHT), the "Seaweed Lady from Sooke," is three years into a crusade that has put Vancouver Island seaweed onto the bodies and dinner plates of guests at such luxury resorts as the Sooke Harbour House and the Kingfisher Oceanside Resort and Spa in Courtenay, B.C.

She hopes getting in on the ground



floor at Whistler's newest hotel will connect her to a much bigger market off the island.

After retiring from local politics in 1999, Bernard sought out a new career consistent with her belief in sustainable community development. Her company, Outer Coast Seaweeds, now employs six people who harvest and process 10 of the

250 seaweeds found between Sooke and Port Renfrew. Of the several tonnes they collect each year, about two-thirds are used in spa treatments, such as body wraps, shampoos and soaps. The rest is used in salads, soups and sauces.

"I test [for contaminants] each year, because seaweed picks up whatever is in the water," she says. The area is well flushed by the

currents and tides, sparsely populated and de-industrialized because of timber-mill closures. Bernard's bigger environmental concern is ensuring that the harvest doesn't destroy the natural stocks of seaweed: "That drove seaweed to the verge of extinction in California."

Steve Weatherbe