

Daniel Swecker

Atlantic salmon are the best species to raise in net pens in Puget Sound and Washington State. An ideal species would:

- Not establish runs in WA waters
- Not cross breed with local populations
- Not eat local fish
- Not eat the feed that local fish populations eat
- Not introduce new diseases to our state

On these issues Atlantic salmon have proven to be ideal.

Not establish runs in WA waters - During the middle part of the 20th century public fisheries agencies attempted to establish runs of Atlantic salmon in Washington and on the west coast. None of these were ever successful. Fish escapes from net pens in Washington over the last 40 years have never resulted in the establishment of runs.

Not cross breed with local populations - No local populations can or have ever bred with Atlantic salmon.

Not eat local fish - Examination of the stomachs of escaped Atlantic salmon have found that they are almost always empty. These fish are conditioned to eat feed pellets and simply starve to death if they are not available.

Not eat the feed that local fish populations eat - Once again, examination of the stomachs of escaped Atlantic salmon have found that they are almost always empty. These fish are conditioned to eat feed pellets and simply starve to death if they are not available.

Not introduce new diseases to our state - Atlantic salmon are raised in quarantined hatcheries that use recirculating water and are disease free. The only diseases that Atlantic salmon exhibit in net pens are those they encounter once they reach salt water that are common to our state. Vaccinations and modern rearing techniques have made the treatment of diseases in net pens almost unnecessary and very rare.

No other commonly reared cold water species can claim all these advantages. Atlantic salmon are the ideal species of fish to raise in net pens in Washington State.