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For the following reasons, I believe Washington State should ban all marine net pen aquaculture in its marine waters. The current state of marine net pen aquaculture is not proficient in protecting wild stocks from dangers posed by marine net pen aquaculture. A ban on such operations should be enacted for the next ten (10) years, after which reevaluation of safeguard could be undertaken.

According to information in the Draft Guidance for Marine Net Pen Aquaculture in Washington State,

marine aquaculture:

- Promotes the introduction of non-native pathogens

- Amplifies rate of infection and therefore amplifies pathogen abundance

- Promotes the increase in virulence of existing pathogens or is the nexus for the emergence of new pathogens

- Promotes disease in wild finfish.

The monoculture, high densities, suppressed immune systems, and the presence of wild pathogens to which these fish are naïve are conditions that can promote the amplification and transmission of these pathogens among the cultured fish (Kurath and Winton 2011).

Marine aquaculture is the just the aquatic version of a c.a.f.o (confined animal feeding operation), all of which should be outlawed for similar reasons including animal welfare.

We should take seriously the catastrophe of the Cooke aquaculture pens that gave way, which allowed thousands of fish to escape and interfere with the wild stocks by consuming nutrients that the wild stocks need and possibly spreading diseases to the wild fish. We've already had this disaster...why invite more disasters of this nature by allowing more marine net pen aquaculture in Washington state waters?

Increases in ocean temperatures brought about by warming global temperatures add another layer of concern about marine net pen aquaculture. It is quite possible that the warming marine waters may increase fish diseases and facilitate their transmission to wild native species that are already on the brink of collapse.

Please ban marine net pen aquaculture in Washington State. We can't afford to further put at risk our native fish.