

Allowing Cooke aquaculture to raise sterile Steelhead trout may help take the pressure off the over-harvesting of wild-caught steelhead. The reasoning behind this statement stems from the decline of indigenous Steelhead trout to roughly six percent of the population's historical size and one of the reasons for this decline is over-harvest. Giving informed consumers the option to obtain farm raised Steelhead rather than over-harvesting the wild population may be enough to help tip the scales toward the wild population's recovery. Furthermore, the aquaculture industry is constantly innovating practices in ways that move it toward a more sustainable and environmentally friendly entity. One of these innovations is integrated multi-trophic aquaculture or IMTA for short. Coupling net pens with macro algae culture and shellfish is a great example of an IMTA system. The algae and shellfish clean the water of excess nutrients around the net pens and the algae oxygenates the water and creates habitat for juvenile organisms. In an attempt to close the deficit on yearly imports of seafood in the country and create more waterfront jobs for American citizens a state cooperative of potential macro algae farmers has come together to make a North American sea vegetable industry a reality. Partnering with established aquaculture firms with infrastructure already in place, like Cooke, would allow this nascent industry an opportunity to grow and prove that it will help the aquaculture industry as a whole reach its full potential in sustainable practice. In closing, I am for the request to change species from Atlantic salmon to sterile Steelhead trout suggested by Cooke aquaculture.