

Esther Kronenberg

As a member of the League of Women Voters of Thurston County, which is now conducting a study on the water resources of our County, I write to urge the Department of Ecology to initiate a SEPA review of Cooke Aquaculture's NPDES application. The Department needs to consult with local, state, federal and tribal governments before reviewing the NPDES permit, especially as numerous serious concerns have arisen or have yet to be determined about the potential harm these pens will do to Puget Sound, its marine ecosystem and its water quality.

I understand the state legislature passed HB 2957 which created a stricter regulatory regime for marine net pen aquaculture. In light of Cooke's previous violations, and the new goal to "eliminate...escapement and to eliminate negative impacts to water quality and native fish, shellfish, and wildlife", it behooves the Department to ensure that permits are drafted to give the highest protection to our common good, the Puget Sound.

I also understand that the SEPA review led by Washington Fish and Wildlife is currently being appealed. Common sense and prudence demand that the information that will be generated during that review must be incorporated into this review of the NPDES permit. There is also a large amount of new information that Cooke's application adds to the public record as well as other data that is expected in the near future that should be added to the record. All this demands that Ecology wait to do this NPDES permit review until ALL the relevant data has been considered.

We are at the limits of ecosystem stability and viability. I urge the Department to conduct the most rigorous review and to take the most stringent measures to protect that which is priceless and can be forever lost - our beautiful Puget Sound and all the living creatures, including humans, whose existence it sustains.

Thank you.

Esther Kronenberg