

Ben Ward

To Comment Letter

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today to express my concerns relating to the proposal to allow Cooke Aquaculture to raise steelhead in these fisheries. I first want to address that I am not a current resident of Washington, however I am an individual that has dreamed of fishing and spending time in the amazing fisheries of your beautiful state. In addition I have a moral responsibility to ensure that my public lands and the species that interact with them are protected.

That is why I am writing to you to say I do not approve of Cooke Aquaculture raising Steelhead in these fisheries. Cooke has shown on multiple occasions that they as a company do not care about the safety of the environment. Be it the placement of their pens in ecosystems that are actively used by endangered species, or the use antibiotic feed and chemicals which can then spread and harm the native flora, or the repeated failures of their pens releasing non-native species into your very watersheds, and last the blatant disregard for the law in relation to the placement of pens on Indian Tribal lands. I understand the importance of aquaculture and the money it brings in, but it has to be done ethically and in a way that protects our environment. Something that Cooke clearly does not care about.

Salmon and Steelhead are under tremendous pressure and an unprecedented decline in your state. That is something that worries me as someone who desperately wants to spend time and money in your state trying to catch these amazing animals. The outdoor industry here in Colorado produces an estimated \$28 billion in consumer spending and an estimated \$2 billion in direct state and local revenue. It is threats like that of Cooke that directly impact the long term future of the outdoor economy. Imagine the impacts of losing an economy of that size and scale, because in the long term it is actions like allowing Cooke to place these farms that will lead to the demise of the outdoor economy.

In summary I urge you as someone who wants to spend time and potentially move to your great state to not allow Cooke to raise steelhead in these fisheries. The risks are too great for declining steelhead and salmon. Cooke has shown that they care more about a quick buck and paying fines than they do about the long term health of the environment and the economy it creates. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Ben Ward