

Joseph Cronrath

Dear Ms. Niewolny and the Washington State Department of Ecology,

I am writing to express my vehement opposition to the approval of permit applications for Cooke Aquaculture Pacific to raise hatchery steelhead.

Cooke aquaculture has displayed blatant disregard in operating, maintaining and rearing net pen salmonid species for aquaculture purposes. The breaching of net pens allowing the transfer of Atlantic salmon into pacific waters was neglectful and should not be taken lightly, no matter what the cause of such failures. Additionally, the farming of hatchery steelhead, while native to the Pacific coast, could pose dangers to wild stocks of pacific salmonids by way of disease transfer.

Are such risks to an increasingly imperiled pacific salmon population worth allowing aquaculture pens in Puget Sound? The creation of jobs with this approval is of course unarguably a benefit. However, these pens could create risks that could place countless other jobs and industries at risk. One unexpected, unplanned disease outbreak, no matter how unlikely, could cause incalculable damage and chaos to our fisheries. The same fisheries that employ and sustain thousands, if not tens of thousands of citizens.

This permit is not worth the risks to native fisheries, no matter how many contingency plans are in place. It should be a carefully planned and orchestrated process with any company or corporation when allowing such a permit, however it should not even be considered for a company with a history of negligence, such as Cooke.