

Rob and Sandy Hillman

We are opposed to the Cooke Aquaculture permit modification allowing Cooke to raise steelhead instead of Atlantic salmon. As twenty-year residents of Bainbridge Island, we have been front-row observers of the fish farm activities. We have seen them push the limits of their permits and good stewardship of the environment. We have seen numerous problems with the fish pens ranging from sea lion incursions and fish escapes to an entire bank of pens floating away. We have recently seen as many as 200 sea lions on the perimeter of the pens because no predator netting exists. Should such problems occur, or even a disaster such as occurred at Cypress Island, these steelhead could escape and cross-breed with wild fish. We were always told we didn't have to worry because Atlantic salmon could not cross-breed, but the same may not be said regarding steelhead. We believe this permit modification should be denied until we can be assured as to what risks it will have on the aquatic environment.