

Brandon Sly

I am writing to express my opposition to the approval of Cooke Aquaculture Pacific NPDES permit application to raise steelhead in open water net pens in Puget Sound. After the Cypress Island net pens collapsed in August, 2017 I, along with many Washingtonians, saw the passage of HB 2957 as a major step forward for the health of Puget Sound. Allowing Cooke Aquaculture to simply switch species does not address the many risks open water net pens pose to the water quality of Puget Sound and its residents. All open water net pens produce waste in the form of fish waste, excess food (and medications), etc. This excess waste can create an imbalance in the surrounding area as seen in British Columbia in November of 2019 <https://thetyee.ca/News/2019/11/20/Algal-Blooms-Tofino/>.

In addition to water quality issues the fish themselves pose a potential risk to the fish and wildlife of Puget Sound. While the majority of triploid are sterile not all of them are. Escaped triploid trout can swim up stream and spawn or compete with native fish. After the 2017 Cypress Island collapse Atlantic salmon were discovered 42 miles up the Skagit river 8 months later. [I would urge The Department to deny Cooke's permit modification request.](https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/escaped-atlantic-salmon-found-42-miles-up-skagit-river/#:~:text=than three months after,lively in the Skagit River. This speaks to the potential for in river competition with native fish if no introgression. Even if all escaped fish are sterile they will still be directly competing and interacting with our native salmon species. In 2017 Morton et al. found a strong correlation between diseases in net pens and disease transfer to wild fish https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0188793. It is important to note that Morton et al. found strong correlation even without there being an escape.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

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