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To Laurie Niewolny,

Today I received much information about some proposed changes to the Cooke Net Pens in Washington State Waters. I can see the Hope Island net pen from our deck. The net pen is located just a short distance from the North Fork mouth of the Skagit River. Ever since the collapse of the Cypress Island Net Pen, which I saw and smelled when it was waiting on the dock for removal, it seems incongruous that net pens are still allowed. The Atlantic Salmon are bad enough, now Cooke wants to use Steelhead. Gradually Wild Steelhead are returning to the Skagit. No matter how careful Cooke claims to be, accidents happen as the two at Cypress show us. Here is a statement I believe in from Wild Salmon Initiative:

"The escape of rainbow/steelhead from any of the Puget Sound aquaculture facilities, whether from small scale leakage or catastrophic facility failure, will pose risks to native salmonids rearing in nearshore marine habitats and rivers due to competition for food and foraging space. This will be particularly true in the case of triploid individuals because, as noted in Cooke's materials, they will have appetites that are likely to be considerably greater than wild juvenile salmon and steelhead due to the faster inherent growth rate of these triploid fish. This means escapees may outcompete wild steelhead, or indeed predate upon them. Since escapees would constitute pollutants under the Clean Water Act, escape prevention and the adequacy of Cooke's escape prevention and escape response plans must be carefully considered in this permit process. The SEPA MDNS requires Cooke to develop a "no-recovery" option to be added to their escape response plan, which is not included in these NPDES application materials. The NPDES review must be based on their full escape plan, not this incomplete record. The MDNS also required Cooke to develop a plan for marking their domesticated stock to distinguish them from free-swimming wild and hatchery steelhead. That marking plan is not included in these NPDES materials, but is an important aspect of escape recovery." For the love of Wild Salmon, Wild Steelhead and Orca Whales, Ecology should not allow steelhead and do everything possible to require Cooke to follow strict guidelines for the net pens until they are finally Gone.

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