

# Ryan Viers

The native wild steelhead that return to the Puget Sound watershed do not need a farmed quasi-sterile distant cousin sitting in the salt, in a ticking time bomb. We saw what happens when a net pen fails just a couple years ago. Those fish were non-native, and hopefully, not trying to spawn with wild salmon or steelhead. The rivers in the Puget Sound watershed have already been beaten within an inch of their lives by years of over-fishing. We are just now starting to realize the error the in our ways from decades past. A river like the Skagit is a prime example and a prized jewel. The Skagit and Sauk rivers used to have legendary runs of wild Steelhead. Now we are just starting to see a slight return to that...after shutting down the steelhead hatchery along with a decades long closure to all fishing, including catch and release, to allow the wild Steelhead a shot at repopulating themselves. Which they are doing and will continue to do under the close watchful eye of many.

Now take this budding recovery success story and put a net pen full of farmed partially sterile Steelhead just outside on the doorstep and it is a disaster waiting to happen. Barring another net pen collapse, there is disease that will be passed on the wild steelhead of Puget Sound, there is the potential escape of some farmed Steelhead which could lead to cross-breeding with Wild stock and dumbing down the genetics which is a step backwards post the hatchery closing. These are just a couple of the bigger issues and this doesnt even address the impact to the ocean and other marine life.

We've seen a net pen failure and the impact it had, along with the piss poor response (and blaming a tide) from Cooke. Do we really want to try this again with a company that clearly only cares about money and not the ecosystem in which impacts? I do not and I know many in WA do not. Puget Sound is a place of natural wonder and beauty...net pens are neither natural or beautiful. It's time they go.