

Brian Ray

As shown by past events, Cooke Aquaculture does not maintain the culture of responsibility and safety necessary to raise fish in net pens, regardless of the species. Rather than allowing a foreign corporation to profit at our expense, perhaps the existing natural capital of the northwest could be leveraged to provide enough fish that we don't need farm raised salmonids. For example, let's remove dams on the Columbia and lower Snake, promote fish passage in smaller tributaries, and restore spawning habitat, which would all boost natural wild fish runs. Then, a plethora of businesses could also exist, from small fishing guides and shops, to larger commercial fisheries. This would diversify the fishing industry revenue, rather than consolidating it in the hands of large players like Cooke, and would also be better for the environment. Furthermore, there would be less risk of disease and escape from farmed fish. A win win for all!

Given the mission of the Dept. of Ecology in Washington State, and the successes in restoring fish runs as seen in places like the Hoh river, allowing Cooke to continue farming salmonids is the least favorable and desirable option on the table. Rather than granting Cooke a permit, that energy, time, and money could be used to achieve a far greater goal, which would be far more sustainable and economically favorable for the state of Washington, and the Pacific Northwest as a whole. Please deny Cooke's permit request.