

Maddox Lightning

To whom it may concern,

I am Maddox Lightning, I grew up on and around this land. It has come to my attention that there is to be considered, a space for the voice of the people regarding the request by Cooke for a species change regarding their choice of fish reared.

It is my opinion that Ecology should not authorize Cooke's modified NPDES permits. There is substantial new information that was not considered during the SEPA process, that to be fully considered, must be delved into deeper before taking action to approve of Cooke's request. When in doubt. Don't. Any damages done due to ignorance are no less irreversible because of it.

Considering important situational factors such as the current lawsuit which is challenging the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and the environmental review process is vital to ensuring the most stable, ethical determination can be reached. I believe Ecology should wait until these proceedings have reached a conclusion, before making one of their own. That way they can stand solidly behind the facts and current law. Other considerations include Washington's landmark 2018 law, HB2957, which has implemented a stricter regulatory regime for marine net pen aquaculture; that is pertinent to viewing Cooke's request with all the possible information. As this decision is one that could potentially have negative, reaching impacts on local flora and fauna, which are potentially irreversible, I feel all should be done to ensure the safety of all involved before determining if any further movement is made towards approving Cooke's request.

Additionally, ensuring the compliance of all rules set by NPDES permits is crucial here!

Switching the specific species of fish harbored does not reduce the water quality risks and day to day pollution that occurs with the implementation of open water net pen aquaculture. I believe it is crucial that Ecology reconsider all water quality risks associated with this choice, and due to the current proceedings, this industry as a whole, and not simply narrow their attention to the harm plausible by a change of species by Cooke. The potential for imbalance here is daunting. The use of medicinal materials on the fish farmed in open water poses a threat to local fish and wildlife downstream. They too can ingest these materials, or seeking food dispensed, enter pens, and upon catching, be then available to potential patrons of the industry. As well as fish entering the nets, there is the potential of escape. And for the fish that remain in the pen, though separated, can still transmit disease as well as viruses and parasites to the indigenous fish which are necessary to the ecological balance of the area. Even when absolutely healthy, the waste of these farmed fish cannot be filtered from the water, and threatens daily pollution to the area. This includes any material from the fish, skin, and byproducts as well as diseased fish which can contribute to ecosystem disrupting changes such as algal blooms. As well, the rights and opinions of those who call this area home are practical and necessary to a good moral standing in this. The change Cooke proposes will come with more than a change in species. There will be unforeseen effects. Though we are wise and with many tools at our disposal, thinking every possibility is out of the realm of reality. Bringing in new fish will likely pose new risks, risks we won't have a solid gauge for until it is tried, in which case, the damage caused might be irreversible. It is my opinion that Ecology should not issue NPDES permits until Cooke has initiated and received agreement from all local, state, federal, and tribal governments.

I am thankful for this time of reaching out, to hear the voices that are listening. We care of what you choose, as it directly affects our lives and livelihoods, as well as our cultures and traditions.

And perhaps the most important, affects the future. It is our choice to choose from awareness. To choose for those yet to come. To honor and protect this earth. And that is worth more than any dollar. That is priceless.

Sincerely,

Maddox Lightning~