

Daniel Swecker

To: DOE

From: Senator Dan Swecker

Subject: Application by Cooke Aquaculture to switch to sterile, all-female, triploid, Rainbow Trout /Steelhead

As a retired state Senator and former fish farmer, I fully understand the risks and impacts of a commercial net pen operation on the environment and native stocks. In addition to a fresh water operation at Rochester, WA, my company also applied for and received a permit to raise fish in saltwater net pens in Case Inlet near Hartstine Island in South Puget Sound

During my tenure in the Senate, I also served on the Senate Natural Resources Committee for 18 years, and am familiar with not only the status of stocks in Puget Sound, but also the various impacts on them, as well as the potential for threats that might cause a deleterious effect on them.

While it has been shown beyond a doubt that Atlantics cannot and do not breed with native Pacific salmon stocks the decision by Cooke Aquaculture to switch to sterile, all-female, triploid, Rainbow Trout /Steelhead is the very best option for eliminating any possible impact on the environment or native stocks. Should any of these fish escape, they will not reproduce because they are sterile. In fact the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife routinely stocks these same fish in freshwater lakes throughout the state.

The preference for these fish is that they grow faster than other fish (considered an advantage by sportsmen). In addition, they will not reproduce and compete with native stocks. The state uses the same process as the private sector to create the triploid fish that they routinely introduce in bodies of water though out the state. There are no chemicals used to do this. Instead, at fertilization, the eggs are subjected to high pressure for a few minutes which causes them to retain three sets of chromosomes. This results in trout/steelhead eggs that produce only sterile fish.

With regard to disease, these stocks are certified disease-free prior to entry in saltwater. The only possible disease -transfer that might occur would be from wild fish to the commercial stocks in the net pens. If such a transfer should occur, the problem would be detected right away and appropriate action would be taken to resolve it. This would result in no additional risk to native stocks.

In my 18 years of experience as a legislator, I see no legitimate statewide policy or priority that would be impacted negatively by these fish being used for commercial aquaculture in net pens. Some public policies would be greatly enhanced. One of those is the need for jobs in our rural communities. In the recent past, commercial net pen aquaculture has provided up to 400 jobs at any one time. The economic viability of some of these communities is heavily dependent on commercial aquaculture.

I would like to make a strong recommendation that this application be approved for the good of rural communities, our natural resources and the state as a whole. Let's stop importing these same

products from other countries and produce them ourselves.

Sincerely,
Dan Swecker
Senator, retired