

Leon Fisher

Im writing with regards to the issue of Cooke Aquaculture requesting to raise Steelhead in open net pens in Puget Sound.

As a Canadian, I am embarassed and ashamed that a Cooke Aquaculture - a Canadian company that is no longer allowed to increase their factory salmon farming in Canadian waters, and is facing a Federal Government decision to remove all net pens from Canadian waters by 2025, would petition Washington State to allow it to operate yet another net pen fish farm.

These farms - no matter what species of fish they contain, have been proven to have many negative impacts on the ocean, its flora and its fauna, and really are only floating factories producing a low grade source of protein, while being a very productive factory for breeding sea lice, parasites and discharging them and pollutants into the water that serves as their sewer.

The detrimental effects of chemicals, waste, parasites, and antibiotics, will negatively impact wild fish stocks from Herring, to Salmon and Steelhead, and thusly affect the health of their predators, including the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Here in British Columbia, we sadly have open net pens raising non-native Atlantic Salmon, but also, native species including Chinook Salmon and Steelhead.

The species being raised does not matter.

The negative effects on wild fish stocks and the ocean are the same, or in some cases, appear to be worse.

As a fisherman with over 50 years of travelling and fishing the Salish Sea, I need to ask you to please REJECT Cooke's application for this farm.

If allowed to proceed, it will leave Puget Sound in a worse condition than you could ever imagine. We cant seem to anticipate what future negative impacts will be, but we know from the short and painful history of net pen fish farming in Canada and around the world's oceans, what the present day impacts are.

And if anyone tells you that raising Triploid Steelhead, that will never interbreed with wild Steelhead is free from risks, I ask you to consider the issues of a net pen Steehead farm approx. 30 miles from where I live here in Powell River.

This fish farm has been operating in Lois Lake for several years, and has decimated the lake's population of wild Cutthroat Trout due to escapes of tens of thousands of farmed steelhead, which compete with the wild fish for food and predate on the wild fry.

Transfer of parasitic worms from the steelhead to the Cutthroat Trout is likely happening as well. The majority of the "escaped" steelhead, which are plentiful and easy to catch on rod and reel, are full of parasitic worms. These worms fill the gut cavity and to a lesser degree the meat. They

appear to slowly kill the steelhead, and are in a word, disgusting.
They are unlike anything I've seen in any other fish, and will make your skin crawl.

I use quotations to qualify the term "escaped", because the fish farm intentionally allows these diseased steelhead to leave the pens as it is less costly that to deal with them and dispose of them properly.

The other type of escaped steelhead we often catch in Lois Lake, are sexually mature males with developed milt sacs, which are NOT Triploid females, and as such, pose a threat to breed with wild fish. The fish farm tries to raise only triploid females, as they grow faster than non-triploid fish or triploid males.

Again, it appears that the fish farm intentionally allows these males to "escape", since they do not grow as fast as the triploid females and are not desired by the farm owners.

These "escapes" have continued for the 10 years Ive lived here, 'and are getting more and more frequent. There are tens of thousands of uglier-than-sin, fat, diseased, wormy non-native steelhead swimming in Lois Lake and I have not heard of a native Cutthroat seen there for several years.

I'll leave you to wonder how such a scenario would play out in Puget Sound.

Best regards,

Leon Fisher

403 554-4338