

ERIC RUNNING

I am opposed to the permit modification allowing Cooke Aquaculture to transition from farming Atlantic Salmon to triploid Steelhead at its existing net pen facilities in Washington State waters. Cooke Aquaculture has demonstrated an inability to maintain its existing net pens since acquiring them, as well as a total lack of candor regarding its maintenance and operational deficiencies. The pens in Rich Passage, which I have personally had the opportunity to view from shore and from the water, were showing clear signs of structural problems for an extended period of time last year, during which time Cooke showed a singular lack of awareness of or willingness to address the deficiencies.

The fact is that no precedent exists for large scale farming of triploid Steelhead in a marine environment. Permitting Cooke Aquaculture to undertake such an effort would be to entrust a company with a troubled compliance record to carry out a large scale experiment in Washington's precious marine environment, with potentially serious consequences for the health of the ecosystem of the Salish Sea. The permit should be denied, and Cooke should end its current Atlantic Salmon farming operations as scheduled as provided for in State law.