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What may have been a good idea 30 years ago is no longer a good idea. Because farming salmon and other fish in tanks on land is now a viable, commercially profitable alternative to fish pens in open water, continuing to permit the farming of fish in Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca no longer makes sense. The pollution caused by the pens (fish waste, uneaten food pellets), as well as the potential to spread viruses, other diseases and parasites to wild fish populations, creates too big a cost to the environment and citizens living in the Puget Sound region that outweighs any economic benefit to the state in lease payments or taxes or to citizens working at the farms. The risks of continued farming are amplified by Cooke's history of ignoring legal requirements and operating their farming activities in a negligent manner. Their reckless disregard for safety was shown by the 2017 release of hundreds of thousands of fish near Cypress Island, their failure through 2017 to keep their pens within their leased area in Port Angeles, and their failure in 2019 to notice a hole in a pontoon for one of their pens off Orchard Rocks in Rich Passage which caused a portion of the pen to dangerously sink and required Bainbridge Island residents to contact the U.S. Coast Guard to investigate.

If Cooke's modification request is granted, the State should not allow Cooke to continue farming fish of any type past 2022, with 2023 and 2024 used by them to remove the pens, remove or close facilities, and monitor environmental conditions in the area.