

## Support Mariculture

I am in support of the modifications Ecology has made to the draft NPDES permits for the Cooke Aquaculture operations. Cooke's transition to growing native species will be good for creating a sustainable seafood source that can be locally grown and well regulated in Washington state. We need to use scientific research and evidence based facts as we navigate towards a more sustainable future.

Ecology has put forward multiple safeguards and environmental reporting requirements that will help further minimize risk, potential impacts and maintain water quality conditions around these types of farm sites. Aquatic farms need clean, healthy water to grow healthy fish. This is true for aquatic farms just as much as it is true that land farms require the maintenance of healthy soil to raise healthy crops. To my knowledge, the fish farms have been growing fish in them for over 30 years in Puget Sound. If there was negative impacts to the surrounding water or sediments, it is doubtful they would be able to continue growing fish in these same locations. The different companies that have operated the farms over this time have all made their mistakes or had accidents happen. Fish farming is not an easy industry. It is fishing and farming combined. Both require you to work in and with Mother Nature and as anybody that fishes or farms already knows, she can be a harsh teacher at times. Like anything we humans do, we learn from our mistakes and try to do things better the next time. In my opinion, Cooke needs to be given a chance to try to do things better. Transitioning to sterile steelhead native trout is a step in the right direction.

- Seafood production will need to increase to provide more food for the expected increased human growth in the human population that is forecasted to occur in the next 30 years. The United Nation global demographic data shows an increase of 2 billion additional people will inhabit the planet by the year 2050. Most of this population growth is expected to occur in areas that are already poor in protein resources and/ or rely primarily on natural seafood resources that are being stretched to capacity already.
- Fishery experts agree that significant increases in the U.S. and global capture fisheries are generally unlikely to occur because most currently utilized capture fisheries have been at their maximum sustainable yield for the past 30 years or longer. Increasing, and most importantly, securing global food production resources will become even more important over the next several decades.
- Wild capture fisheries for most of the traditional northwest fish species are in decline or are currently at their maximum harvestable yields to sustain the species.
- Tribal and commercial fisheries in Washington, Oregon and California do not exist at anywhere near their historic levels. By working on the water and working with fish, aquaculture can provide locally produced seafood, employment opportunities, and help to maintain this region's cultural connection to producing food from the sea.
- There is scientific agreement that increasing mariculture (ocean farming) will have less environmental impact than a proportional increase in terrestrial food production systems. There is a finite amount of freshwater available for an increase in terrestrial agriculture and most suitable

growing areas have fully exploited freshwater resources.

- Mariculture, done correctly and responsibly, can be a sustainable resource for seafood and become a resource to help supplement salmon enhancement, recovery operations and possibly even Orca recovery.

- WDNR and the other state agencies have refocused their regulations and helped to make the necessary corrections that will guide the marine net pen industry to more environmentally sound and sustainable practices. Strict regulations continue to make Washington's aquaculture operations part of the long term, sustainable solution to increasing seafood for human consumption.

- If we want to eat it, we better learn how to grow it.