



## Seattle Human Rights Commission

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Seattle Human Rights Commission Condemns Department of Fish and Wildlife Permit for Cooke Aquaculture and urges Moratorium on Atlantic Salmon Aquaculture in Puget Sound**

**For information contact:**

Jeremy Wood

206-765-9031

jeremywood10@gmail.com

The Seattle Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) joins the Northwest Indian Fishing Commission (NWIFC) in calling for an end to Atlantic salmon fish farming in Puget Sound. The Commission further condemns the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s decision to issue on October 2 a permit for Cooke Aquaculture to expand its fish farming operations by one million Atlantic Salmon.

The August 19, 2017 escape of about 200,000 non-native fish from a Cooke Aquaculture facility on Cypress Island into the north Puget Sound shows the stark danger this practice poses. Atlantic salmon have now been caught as far south as Alki Point, thus affecting Seattle area waters. This tragedy harms all communities that depend upon native stocks and disproportionately impacts local indigenous peoples, impairing their treaty rights.

Article 8(2)(b) of the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights requires States “provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for . . . [a]ny action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories, or resources.” This provision requires the State act to halt a practice proven injurious to tribal resource interests, and that the State support local tribes in seeking redress for this disaster.

The escaped Atlantic salmon now threaten native juvenile fish with viral and parasitic outbreaks. They have begun preying on juveniles from native stocks and competing with those stocks for food and habitat. They are, as the State Department of Ecology has appropriately designated, a pollutant. We must not allow them in our waters.

The need for an aquacultural moratorium is further demonstrated by the State and Cooke Aquaculture’s inadequate response to this disaster. As recently articulated by NWIFC Chairperson Lorraine Loomis, poor communication between the State and Cooke delayed responsive action and allowed this invasive species to spread throughout the Salish Sea.

Importantly, this outbreak is not unprecedented. Between 1996 and 1999, more than 500,000 Atlantic salmon have escaped into Puget Sound. As Swinomish Chairperson and National Congress of American

Indians President Brian Cladoosby has stated; “it was not a question of if, but when, this would happen.” Unless the practice is halted immediately, tribes will have to wonder, “when next?”

For these reasons, the Commission urges the Department of Fish and Wildlife to revoke the October permit and urges private and governmental actors to halt the practice of Atlantic salmon farming in the Puget Sound. Pending proposals to expand the practice into the Strait of Juan de Fuca must be rejected to protect the human and treaty rights of local fishing and tribal communities. And the State must reimburse the costs unfairly incurred by local tribes forced to shoulder this ecological burden..

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