

Natural Resources Building
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

1111 Washington St. S.E.
Olympia, WA 98501



STATE OF WASHINGTON
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

(360) 902-3000
TTY: (360) 902-1996
Fax: (360) 902-3026

E-mail: Info@rco.wa.gov
Web site: www.rco.wa.gov

September 6, 2017

The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
Post Office Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board is greatly concerned about the potential impacts to our native salmon and steelhead populations due to the recent Atlantic salmon net pen failure near Cypress Island in northern Puget Sound.

The escape of potentially hundreds of thousands of adult, non-native, Atlantic salmon into the Salish Sea is cause for alarm. The impact of these non-native fish on our Pacific Northwest salmon, which we are trying so hard to recover and restore, is of great concern. Impacts may include the transmission of disease or parasites from the farmed fish and competition with native fish populations for food and habitat. Of greater concern is the possibility that the escaped salmon could eventually adapt to local conditions, leading to rapidly growing, self-sustaining populations of Atlantic salmon colonizing our watersheds.

Given the high degree of risk, uncertainty and potential impacts of Atlantic salmon aquaculture on our wild fish, we are pleased to see the immediate and multi-faceted response of the state agencies involved. It is entirely appropriate to treat the situation as a spill response, as the agencies are doing, and we fully support the containment and recovery efforts initiated so far. However, in regards to the unlimited fishery on Atlantic salmon established after the release, we are concerned that there could be collateral impacts to native, unmarked Pacific salmon caused by recreational anglers pursuing Atlantic salmon and request that this strategy be monitored very closely to ensure the potential benefits outweigh the possible impacts.

Looking forward, once the full investigation into the causes and impacts from the net pen failure is complete, we strongly urge the state to look at the adequacy of our state and federal laws, rules and policies on commercial net pen operations and update as necessary to minimize the risk of future failures and the release of a non-native, potentially invasive fish in Washington waters. It would also be prudent to examine other existing aquaculture pens in the waters of the state and conduct repairs or closures as needed. We also support a moratorium on any new aquaculture construction or additions to existing aquaculture pens until this review is completed and necessary corrective measures are in place.



We thank you and the agencies and tribes for the immediate response to this situation and the actions taken thus far. We are willing and ready to serve as a resource for you or the agencies involved in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Troutt', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Troutt, Chair
Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board

cc: JT Austin
Governor's Executive Policy Office