



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 18, 2018

Washington's future salmon harvests will include net pens, Cooke Aquaculture Pacific says

OLYMPIA, Washington – Cooke Aquaculture Pacific today pledged before the state House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee to help ensure that Washington waters contain fish to harvest for future generations.

As state and tribal fishery programs increasingly adopt fish farming to address declining wild salmon populations, the company offered to serve as an able, expert, nimble partner to support those efforts.

“Hatchery-based restoration programs in Washington are showing diminishing returns even though hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on these methods,” said Dr. Jon Grant, a leading aquaculture-environment researcher with global experience from [Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia](#).

“At some point, complementary strategies will be needed to ensure that there are fish in the water. It’s not an either-or proposition between wild and farmed fish.”

Grant echoed comments made in [a recent op-ed by Kurt Grinnell, the chair of the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe](#), which expressed an ongoing commitment to employ net-pen aquaculture techniques.

“Cooke Aquaculture Pacific is ideally situated to provide technical expertise and fisheries best-practices, including integrated management, hatchery operations, research, technology, infrastructure, and more,” said Joel Richardson, Vice-President of Public Relations for Cooke.

“We have seen firsthand what happens when fish disappear from the streams – and we have seen it in our own backyard on the east coast of Canada. Cooke Aquaculture is exactly the kind of partner that will be needed to assist when the state and the Northwest treaty tribes adopt new strategies for salmon enhancement.”

“The [Fundy Salmon Recovery project](#) – a collaborative partnership effort on Grand Manan Island in New Brunswick and the first conservation project in the world to raise endangered wild Atlantic salmon on a dedicated marine farm – is an example of Cooke’s commitment to work successfully with all who care about recovering the species, including the Fort Folly First Nation,” Richardson said.

“Utilize us,” Richardson said to the Northwest treaty tribes. “Let us duplicate in Puget Sound the success we’ve achieved in the Bay of Fundy working with partners to help restore wild fish populations. As fish people who are invested in having enough fish in the water to harvest, we have something significant in common.”

Cooke Aquaculture Pacific facility employees packed the committee room to speak from firsthand experience about this common interest.

“Taking care of these waters and the world as a whole is vital to me,” said Kyl Wood, marine services manager for Cooke Aquaculture Pacific’s operations.

“Our wild fisheries are struggling worldwide due to overpopulation. Sustainability is the key to our future. We spend everyday on these waters, working to protect them and give back. I know how important it is for us to find ways to take care of our planet the same way she takes care of us.”

“I love what I do,” said Raymond Hoekstra, a member of the Makah tribe, who has worked at Cooke Aquaculture Pacific’s Port Angeles facility that past three years.

“I get to feed fish and watch them grow and help them grow. And I get to teach our employees what I’ve learned over the years.”

“I chose to work in aquaculture because, as a sport fisherman, I felt it was sustainable way to meet the growing demand for fish in the marketplace and still have fish for future generations, and I still believe that today,” said Doug Simms, hatchery manager for Cooke Aquaculture Pacific and an industry employee for 26 years.

“Our mission is to provide affordable, healthy seafood for millions of people,” said Nicole Robinson who has worked at Cooke’s Anacortes facility the past five years. “We live, we work, we play here, and we would never jeopardize the places we call home. For me, losing my job would mean losing my home and starting over for my two young children. This is a recipe for failure. To say our jobs are dispensable is unfair.”

Cooke Aquaculture Pacific acquired American Gold Seafoods in June of 2016, an acquisition valued at \$70 million. Cooke Aquaculture Pacific employs 80 people in Washington, supports another 100 indirect jobs, and maintains an annual payroll of approximately \$8.5 million. It also contributes lease revenue and taxes to the state, and has made and is committed to continue making significant investment in the facilities it has acquired.

“We are new to Washington, but we are invested here,” said Richardson. “We care about the fish and the water here. We care about the people here. We want to be here. We want to help, and we want to earn your trust. We believe that our company has much to offer, and ask only that you give our company a chance.”

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