

FORUM UPDATE

Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum Meeting: Aug. 3, 2017

Topic: Update Forum members on discussions related to Ecology's process to develop recommendations for managing commercial net pen aquaculture

Background:

Department of Ecology is updating recommendations for managing commercial Atlantic salmon net pen aquaculture. Ecology has determined that existing management recommendations are out of date and need to incorporate modern science, technology, and practices. Their goal is to develop a spatial analysis tool and new management recommendations for net pens to help guide regulatory authorities in assessing net pen operations. The primary source of modern science is a 2013 report from NCCOS (National Center for Coastal Ocean Science), an arm of the National Ocean Service of NOAA.

There are currently 8 Atlantic salmon net pens in Puget Sound operated at 4 locations. Cooke Aquaculture, a large multinational business with operations around the world, recently purchased all 8 Puget Sound net pens. This was first brought to our attention at the Tolt Fish Habitat Restoration Group, where Kurt Beardslee from Wild Fish Conservancy presented on it. Beth leDoux and Colin Wahl, co-chairs of the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Technical Committee (SBSRTC), thought it would be an important topic to discuss with the members of the SBSRTC. We invited Ecology to give a presentation on the project in April. Representatives from Ecology were not able to attend the April meeting and Kurt Beardslee came at that time to present on Wild Fishes understanding and issues surrounding net pens. At the June SBSRTC meeting Ecology representatives, Cedar Bouta and Kessina Lee, gave their project presentation and fielded questions from the committee.

We are still early in the process. Ecology is starting to draft recommendations now, which will undergo agency and expert review before being released for public comment (public comment expected in fall of 2018). Ecology plans to have this project completed by the spring 2019.

Current net pen actions in Puget Sound: To accommodate a Navy pier at its current location, one current net pen, inside Ediz hook near Port Angeles, is being decommissioned and rebuilt nearby in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Technical Committee Meeting summaries:

April 4th, 2017

Kurt Beardslee of Wild Fish Conservancy presented on **Net Pen Management Implications**; a round table discussion followed.

Overview: Kurt Beardslee from the Wild Fish Conservancy gave a presentation on implications of net pen aquaculture in Puget Sound and noted that WFC has a Dropbox with lots of reference literature (see link in resources). Kurt covered potential problems associated with Atlantic salmon in net pens including: fish escapement, waste, predator and wild fish attraction to pens, parasites, viruses, drugs and chemical treatments, fish feed, etc. Concerns expressed that previous "best management practices" or recommendations from Ecology have not been followed by Icicle; there is no indication that Cooke will follow either. Ecology updating their 30yr old recommendations concern that there is no enforceable regulatory "check" on net pen operations. Concern expressed on confusing matrix of permitting and unclear net pen oversight.

Round table Discussion

Numerous questions were discussed spanning policy, technical, scientific concerns and inquiries. Concern expressed about composition of Ecology work group, especially technical reviewers— and whether salmon recovery and non-industry perspectives are adequately represented.

Wrap up: Beth and Colin will compile questions. Transmission will be CC'd to everyone. Cedar will visit in June to answer questions. She is not in position to take recommendations/changes. RCO Dropbox link will be sent via email.

June 6th, 2017

Cedar Bouta and Kessina Lee from Dept. of Ecology presented on the Ecology-led **Net Pen Management Recommendation Process**

Net Pen Management Recommendation Process:

Cedar Bouta and Kessina Lee from Ecology gave a presentation on the recommendation process currently in progress. Spring 2019 is the target date to finalize the recommendations. Public review in Fall of 2018. NPDES permits for current operations are due for renewal and will be related to carrying out these recommendations indirectly. The applications are due 4/17 and there will be two public comment periods. Follow up discussion included issues of tribal co-manager involvement in this process, the expertise of the technical review panel for this work, the fact that our neighbors in Alaska have banned net pen use and King County attempted to ban them in the past.

PDC follow-up actions:

Based on feedback concerns expressed by members of the Technical Committee members, Scott Powell, on behalf of the Basin, requested that the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council add the topic to an upcoming meeting.

Net Pen Resources

The ecological impacts of net pens is a complicated and controversial subject with decades of research and a large body of literature. Resources have been compiled in a [Dropbox folder](#) that should aid with the review of this subject along with resources listed below. Ecology has many more on their resources website (see below). While caution is warranted, so is a thorough review of the available information before passing judgement about ecological effects of net pens on salmon in Puget Sound. Below are some additional links that should be helpful, including a link to Wild Fish Conservancy's literature dropbox on the the subject.

Link to Ecology's Net Pen resources website:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/aquaculture/NetPen/resources.html>

Wild Fish Conservancy's net pen literature library [Dropbox](#)

B.C.'s salmon aquaculture review from 1993:

<https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/bib92835.pdf>

B.C.'s Aquaculture review from 1997:

http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/files/ea_review/SAR_summary_report_vol5.pdf

EIS for Washington state:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1206019.html>