

Sky is falling

Cooke Aquaculture CEO Glenn Cooke (“N.S. invests \$25 million in fish farm,” June 22) says: “My family has been farming the ocean for more than 25 years and the sky hasn’t fallen.”

I beg to differ. For those who value wildlife, in this case wild Atlantic salmon, the sky has absolutely fallen.

Pursuant to growth of open-pen salmon aquaculture in the outer Bay of Fundy, the runs of wild salmon to 33 rivers emptying into the Bay of Fundy (23 in Nova Scotia) have been lost.

The wild stock to each river is genetically unique, honed by evolution during the 10,000 years since the last ice age. We now believe those wild gene pools were defiled by infiltration of inferior genes from hundreds of thousands of escaped farmed fish from pens owned by Mr. Cooke and his ilk. There were approximately 40,000 wild fish returning to those rivers as recently as 1986. Only a few hundred are left today.

The Atlantic Salmon Federation (another NGO doing the government’s job) has monitored the Maguadavic River in southern New Brunswick for almost two decades, logging the steady depletion of wild salmon and their eventual displacement by genetically-inferior aquaculture hybrids unfit to successfully reproduce and survive in the wild. In the absence of any other plausible explanation, we can logically and confidently infer the other 32 rivers have been similarly impacted.

And it has happened in Scotland, as well. It’s already happening on the south coast of Newfoundland as Cooke expands there. It will now happen on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia.

We can’t just restock those wild salmon. Once lost, genes are gone forever. Thanks to corporate greed and short-term political expediency, the sky continues to fall.

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