

Thousands of Farm Raised Salmon Escape in the Pacific Northwest

In the fish version of a great escape, thousands of Atlantic salmon have escaped from their holding pen at a fish farm in Washington state. The official estimate is currently at 4000 to 5000 escapees, and crews are currently working to recover as many fish as they can. Even so, this is hardly good news for anyone involved, as the invasive Atlantic salmon may breed with native Chinook salmon and pose a threat to the food supply. There were higher than usual tides in the area due to the eclipse, but most of the experts investigating the breach conclude that the culprit was faulty holding pens.

No Concrete Answers

Cooke Aquaculture, the owners of the farm the salmon escaped from, are not sure of the number of fish that escaped, leaving marine ecologists and Washington state wildlife officials to guess at the extent of the damage done. Wildlife officials have invited fishers in the area to help in the repair effort. In a statement from Ron Warren "Our first concern, of course, is to protect native fish species...So we'd like to see as many of these escaped fish caught as possible." There is the possibility that these escaped fish will also pass diseases onto the delicate Pacific salmon populations.

Future Implications

Michael Rust, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration researcher, brings up a good point when he points out that these fish are unlikely to pass on diseases to

other salmon, saying “These things are kind of couch potatoes. They are domesticated. Imagine a dairy cow getting lost out in the Serengeti. It doesn’t last very long.”

Perhaps a salmon disease epidemic is unlikely with these particular fish, but there is no way to measure the effect it would have on the animals consuming it. This also calls into question the industry’s ability to handle the ramifications of the new genetically modified salmon, the first genetically modified animal available for consumption. Many of the supporters of the fish claim the chance of escape will be unlikely should feel very uneasy after a mishap of this magnitude.

Related Reading:

- *Safe Seafood and What to Avoid in 2017*
- *Genetically Modified Salmon Is On Its Way To Your Store*
- *Wild Caught? Maybe Not – Salmon Sold to You May Have Been Farm Raised*

Sources:

- *Thousands of Atlantic salmon escape from fish farm into Pacific – The Guardian*
- *Please go fishing, Washington state says after farmed Atlantic salmon escape broken net – Seattle Times*
- *Genetically Modified Salmon Is On Its Way To Your Store – Organic Lifestyle Magazine*