

Fish at Risk: Why Wild Salmon Matter



One of nature's great migrations—the life story of the Pacific salmon—connects the rushing mountain streams to the broad Pacific Ocean and back again, cycling vital nutrients and nourishing plants, birds, animals and humans.

Each year millions of salmon return to Alaska and Pacific rivers and are harvested in carefully managed fisheries, supporting the economies of many coastal communities. The commitment to protect, restore and sustain these fish has united residents throughout the region—yet recent developments threaten these efforts. Various agencies are proposing to change the way we manage the ocean and natural resources. This threatens wild salmon and other fisheries. These threats include:

Genetically engineered (GE) fish. No longer a sci-fi fantasy, GE fish are being produced in labs all over the world and could soon be raised in salt water. Several states have banned GE fish, but not the federal government, which controls offshore waters. GE Atlantic salmon is currently under FDA review pending commercial release.

Open ocean aquaculture. The development of open ocean aquaculture fish feedlots (as close as three miles to the coast) will move existing problems of net-pen aquaculture beyond local control and into a less regulated environment.

Despite early promise of a “blue revolution,” the growing of carnivorous fish species has led to a decrease in ocean productivity, increased pollution and the appearance of virulent disease infestations in native fish.

The seas are the last public commons, held by the government in trust for the good of all. Partitioning the ocean into private fish farms, mineral claims or garbage dumps will violate that trust.

Wild salmon have been shown to have many health enhancing benefits and play a vital role in sustaining the environment, yet ill-considered actions are placing wild salmon and other marine life in jeopardy. The informed consumer has a vital role in setting sound policy and preserving nature's bounty.

Wild Pacific salmon is available year-round, fresh, frozen, canned or smoked. Supporting sustainable fisheries is good for your health, good for the environment and good for the future.

What you can do

- ▶ **On GE fish:** Contact the FDA and urge a permanent ban on use or release of genetically engineered fish in open waters. Write to: FDA, 5630 Fishers Lane Room 1061, Rockville, MD 20852 or visit gefisch.org for more information.
- ▶ **On offshore aquaculture.** Contact your elected officials and urge them to oppose open ocean aquaculture (OOA) in the U.S. exclusive economic zone. Visit IATP's Fish and Marine Conservation Web site—iatp.org/fish—for further updates on new OOA legislation and news on what you can do about it.

Related issues

Country of origin labeling. Know where your food comes from and insist that the information is listed by retailers. By September 2004, all seafood will be labeled showing whether it is wild or farmed and in what country it was produced.

The occurrence of mad cow disease in the U.S. emphasized the need for the traceability of food sources. All concerns about public health and industrial agriculture are equally relevant to industrial aquaculture where many of the same abuses persist.

Contaminants. Farmed salmon have also recently been shown in scientific studies to contain significantly higher levels of PCBs, dioxins and other carcinogens than wild salmon.

Colorants. To mimic the color of wild salmon, farmed salmon have colorants added to their feed, without which their flesh would be an unappealing gray. The FDA requires that farmed salmon be labeled as colored, both on the packages and in the retail refrigerated case. ●

For more information

IATP's Marine and Fish Conservation Program
ussalmonnetwork.org
iatp.org/fish or call (877) 565-1287

Go Wild Campaign

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