

Tölvupóstur 31. júlí 2024

Dear Minister Bjarkey Olsen Gunnarsdóttir,

I write to you from South-West Ireland, near the world famous Salmon and Sea trout fishery of Lough Currane.

Being only 35, unfortunately I can already attest the significant decline in Salmon runs, not to mention the decimation of Sea trout, since the early 2000s. It was less than two decades ago when as a boy and later a teenager, I remember fly fishing with confidence knowing a natural, beautiful and most of all wild fish was bound to take; now however it is a different story.

Ever since aquaculture, namely open-pen salmon farming here in the coastal waters of Ireland, the population of wild fish has steadily declined. This due to several factors; water quality which drastically worsens with open-pen farming, as the terrible "food" and faecal matter spread out from the pens and fall to the ocean floor, permeating the aquatic environment, destroying the natural homeostasis of the water in the surrounding areas. Furthermore, the hideous diseases that infect the fish housed in the pens, cramped in unnatural density and by definition "penned in". These diseases then spread to the wild population, visible with unsightly and unhealthy numbers of sea lice on wild fish and skin infections commonplace, often leading to weakness and ultimately death.

What was once a thriving fishery and tourist attraction here in Ireland, is now merely a shadow of its former self. Salmon have greatly declined and nothing like the numbers of fish are caught nowadays, or even seen on the numerous fish counters throughout the Currane fishery. The Sea trout, given the in-shore swimming patterns close to the coast, have suffered even more and bear the scars of sea lice and poor water quality. Their numbers, needless to say, have been decimated.

I fear that Iceland, should the bill for new aquaculture licenses be passed, would face a similar decimation of wild fish populations, which would be a generational scandal. It is our duty to protect the precious wilderness handed to us by our forefathers and an integral part of this wilderness are wild Salmon and Sea trout. Not only that, but it would also further impact populations of wild migratory fish in general, all over the North Atlantic, of which Irish salmon and Sea trout are a part.

I voice these concerns in the hopes that they may, however meagrely, help raise awareness on the aforementioned issues and further hope you might share these concerns with your parliamentary committee. I sincerely hope the verdict impedes this antiquated and irresponsible practise, that of open-pen aquaculture farming, so that our children might also wonder at these wild fish we have so taken for granted.

Sincerely,

Lytton Scott