

Forming an Opinion: Farm-Raised Salmon

The following article appeared in your local newspaper in Green River, Maine. The article caught your attention because you know that many families in Green River are involved in either fishing or aquaculture industries. You also know the local salmon hatchery located near the mouth of the Green River employs many town residents. And one of your favorite foods is salmon!

Farm-Raised Salmon: Friend or Foe?

DATELINE: GREEN RIVER, MAINE

The environmental group Fishhuggers has proposed a ban on building new farms for raising salmon in Maine. They also are asking for an overhaul of the entire state regulation system. The group announced its stand as a result of the recent escape of farm-raised salmon into Maine's Emerald Bay.

According to the group, farm-raised fish are bred for qualities very different from those of wild salmon. Fishhuggers reports that the danger is that farm-raised fish can escape their pens and make their way into rivers where wild salmon spawn, mate with them, and pass on genetic characteristics unsuitable for the wild fish population. Fishhuggers also fears that farm-raised fish could pass

on serious diseases. They charge that the fish farms are a major source of pollution as fish waste, extra fish food, and chemicals used to clean the fish eventually end up in the sea.

Maine's aquaculture industry, which is the second largest industry in the state, argues that banning the salmon farms would be economic suicide. They claim that escapes from the farm pens are actually rare, and interbreeding with wild fish is even rarer. Moreover, they insist that little danger exists that escaped fish would cause damage to the wild salmon gene pool. This debate will continue at a meeting to be held at the Green River Town Hall at 7:00 P.M. Thursday evening.

As a concerned citizen, you know that you will be expected to take a position on the economic and ecological issues this article raises. You decide to do some research to learn more.

OBJECTIVES

Identify issues involving farm-raised salmon.

Gather and organize information about salmon farming.

Compose a letter stating an opinion about the issue.

Evaluate the opinions of others on the issue of salmon farming.

Recommend a course of action regarding the farming issue.

Forming an Opinion: Farm-Raised Salmon *continued*

MATERIALS

- paper and pencil
- reference sources, including the Internet (if available)

Procedure

1. What are the issues presented in the newspaper article?

2. What questions do you have about the issues?

3. Where might you look for answers to your questions?

4. Research the issue. Use index cards to take notes and summarize the main points. Record the source of the information. Be sure to evaluate the reliability of each source before using the information. Include the following:

For a Book: Title, Author, Publisher/Distributor, Copyright date

For a Magazine Article: Title, Author, Source, Date

For a Web site: URL, Name of organization or individual sponsoring site, Date last updated, Date visited

For an Interview: Person interviewed, Credentials, Date, Location

Forming an Opinion: Farm-Raised Salmon *continued***Analysis**

- 1. Constructing Tables** What did you learn about the advantages and disadvantages of salmon fisheries? Organize your information below.

DATA TABLE: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SALMON FARMING

Advantages	Disadvantages

- 2. Examining Data** Did you learn anything in your research to refute the statements made in the newspaper article? What are the facts? What are their sources?

- 3. Classifying** What information did you find that gives the fish farmers' point of view?

Forming an Opinion: Farm-Raised Salmon *continued*

Conclusions

- 4. Drawing Conclusions** Think about how each of the following individuals might view the proposed legislation to ban salmon farming.

local restaurant owner

conservation biologist

salmon hatchery farmer

Fishhuggers environmental activist

sports fisherman

local consumer

Work with a group. Have each member choose a role from the list above or any other role that is appropriate. On a separate sheet of paper have each person write a letter to the state regulators stating their support or rejection of the proposed ban. Be sure each person gives solid facts to support their opinion.

- 5. Defending Conclusions** With a group, form a state review committee. Have each member read his or her letter. Allow time for questions and discussion. Look for points about which you can all agree. Then build on them to reach a compromise or alternative solution that will meet the needs of everyone concerned about this environmental issue. As a group decide if the ban should be implemented. Write a group decision stating the reasons.

- 6.** What persuaded you to accept the solution? Was it possible for the solution to accommodate all points of view? Why or why not? Do you think the correct decision was made? Record all your ideas.
