

For Immediate Release

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New FDA assessment of AquaBounty's genetically engineered salmon challenged by environmental, food, Indigenous advocates

Organizations across the country come together in mounting opposition against the biotech company, with three coordinated protests happening on Thursday.

The biotech company Aquabounty, which produces genetically engineered (GE) salmon, is facing challenges on multiple fronts this Thursday, December 15, including in a hearing with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and in demonstrations in Toledo, OH and Seattle, WA.

During a [virtual public meeting](#) that will take place from 1-5 pm EST on Thursday, representatives from Nature Canada, the North American Marine Alliance, Fishadelphia, Real Food Generation, and Friends of the Earth will present their feedback on a new FDA assessment of AquaBounty's GE salmon. Their presentations will focus on remaining holes in the FDA's analysis and continued concerns around GE salmon's risks to threatened wild salmon populations as well as Indigenous peoples who depend on wild salmon.

On Thursday at 10 am EST, a northwest Ohio grassroots citizen group, the [Williams County Alliance](#), will show up at the Toledo Port Authority's board meeting to make their concerns heard about a new GE salmon facility proposed by AquaBounty. They will be joined by the Lake Erie Advocates.

That evening, at 4:45 pm PST, a group of fishermen, Indigenous leaders and allies convened by the grassroots group [#BlockCorporateSalmon](#) will also stage a protest against AquaBounty at the iconic Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle. The event is framed as a candlelight vigil for wild salmon, to illustrate the grave threats posed by GE fish. The group chose to gather at Pike Place Fish Market partly to uplift the abundance of [sustainable](#), wild seafood sold at the market in contrast to AquaBounty's farmed GE salmon.

Last month, the FDA [released](#) their draft amended environmental assessment of AquaBounty's GE salmon, which is trademarked as [AquAdvantage salmon](#) and reported to grow to market size at twice the rate of a wild Atlantic salmon. The assessment was made in response to a 2020 federal [court order](#) for the FDA to conduct additional analysis of GE salmon's risks.

Specifically, the assessment focuses on two AquaBounty facilities in Prince Edward Island, Canada, where AquAdvantage eggs are produced and AquAdvantage fish are grown. In addition to Thursday's virtual meeting, the FDA is accepting public comment on its report through January 17, 2023.

Experts from the presenting organizations say that the FDA's new analysis doesn't fully address important issues, including incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and consent, proper disposal of deceased fish, usage of antibiotics and antifungals, the potential for GE salmon eggs to be sent mistakenly to [open-net-pen](#) salmon farms and containment protocols during power outages and storms, such as a [2008 storm](#) that caused mass fish escape at an AquaBounty facility in Panama.

In October, a former AquaBounty employee came forth as a whistleblower, sharing [sweeping evidence](#) of worker safety, consumer health, animal welfare and environmental violations at the company's Indiana production facility. [Photos and videos](#) revealed poor adherence to containment protocols.

"This raises the question of whether AquaBounty can be trusted to follow its stated plans for preventing escape of GE salmon into wild ecosystems," said **Tina White, program director of Uprooted and Rising**, an organization that mobilizes students, faculty and other members of higher education institutions for community-controlled food systems.

"If GE salmon escape and establish in the wild, the effects could be disastrous for threatened Atlantic salmon," said **Mark Butler, senior advisor with Nature Canada**, one of Canada's oldest conservation nonprofits.

Currently, the only remaining wild Atlantic salmon in the U.S. are found in Maine waters, close to Prince Edward Island, and listed as [endangered](#). While AquAdvantage females are engineered to be sterile, the sterilization techniques are not 100 percent effective, meaning it's technically possible for GE salmon to [breed](#) with wild fish. Furthermore, escaped sterile fish would still compete for resources against wild salmon.

Despite concerns, AquaBounty is pushing to open a new facility in Pioneer, Ohio that's capable of producing 10,000 metric tons of GE salmon per year, dwarfing the Indiana facility's 1,200 metric ton capacity. In October, despite NASDAQ's [threatening](#) to delist AquaBounty due to low share prices, the Toledo Port Authority approved increasing its support for the Ohio facility to over \$400 million in bonds.

Additional quotes:

Rachel Heaton, Muckleshoot Tribal Member and co-founder of Mazaska Talks: "My people are known as the Salmon People. To sustain our wild salmon is to sustain our culture and our way of life. The risk of introducing these GE salmon to any waterways would be detrimental to our people, the balance of our ecosystems and the biodiversity of our waters."

Jaydee Hanson, Policy Director of Center for Food Safety: “AquaBounty misrepresents its system to raise salmon in tanks that they claim will be recirculating water. In fact, their operations literally mine water, foul it with salmon feces and dump it into the nearest river. They have a serious problem of illness in their chronically inflamed fish. They are not disclosing how many antibiotics they use. Consumers don’t need sick fish like these.”

Fawn Sharp, President of the Quinault Nation in Taholah, WA and President of the National Congress of American Indians: “There are many risks if the FDA continues to do this work without checks and balances, without being held accountable to applying best science.”

Event details:

Virtual FDA public meeting

- Date: Thursday, December 15, 2022
- Time: 1-5 pm EST
- Location: Online ([registration](#))

Toledo Port Authority protest

- Date: Thursday, December 15, 2022
- Time: 8 am EST comments to board; 10 am protest
- Location: Toledo Lucas County Port Authority Board Meeting, 2nd floor classrooms A&B, One Maritime Plaza, Toledo, OH 43604

Pike Place Market protest

- Date: Thursday, December 15, 2022
- Time: 4:45 pm PST
- Location: Pike Place Market, Seattle, WA 98101

For day-of updates, visit #BlockCorporateSalmon on Instagram ([@BlockCorporateSalmon](#)) and Twitter ([@BlockCorpSalmon](#)).

About #BlockCorporateSalmon:

The #BlockCorporateSalmon campaign is a national campaign focused on educating the public on the ecological hazards of genetically engineered salmon, while centering Native-led solutions like dam removal and salmon habitat restoration as real solutions to the salmon crisis. Inspired by the leadership of Indigenous Tribes protecting culturally significant wild Salmon stocks and the global food sovereignty movement, the #BlockCorporateSalmon campaign is calling for a global boycott of genetically engineered salmon. Learn more:

www.uprootedandrising.org/blockcorporatesalmon.