

Judge says farmed fish can't be counted

June 15 2007

A federal judge in Spokane, Wash., has ruled that only wild fish can be counted in determining which species are endangered.

The ruling by Judge John C. Coughenour nullified a Bush administration policy that allowed hatchery fish to be included in determining which fish should be protected under the Endangered Species Act, The New York Times said Thursday.

The newspaper said a 2004 decision by the National Marine Fisheries Service was condemned by environmental groups as a distortion of the endangered-species law.

Coughenour said mixing the numbers of hatchery and wild populations when deciding on protections "is, in fact, contrary to the best available scientific evidence."

"A healthy hatchery population is not necessarily an indication of a healthy natural population," he said.

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Citation: Judge says farmed fish can't be counted (2007, June 15) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-06-farmed-fish.html>

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