Study Shows GE Salmon Can Interbreed with Wild Stock

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

When KMXT last spoke with State Representative Garren Tarr, she was on her way back to Alaska from a visit to the Canadian Maritime Provence of Prince Edward Island. She was there to raise awareness of genetically engineered salmon, which could be produced there. Earlier in the year she had introduced a bill banning such fish in Alaska during.

The Anchorage Democrat has been following the GE salmon issue closely, and came across a report in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B, the London-based journal of biology, which reports a study that shows GE salmon can interbreed with wild stocks if given the chance:

“Their findings are that these genetically modified salmon can breed, and in this case, hybridization took place with wild brown trout. And what’s really alarming is that the hybridized species actually was able to out-compete the genetically modified and native counterpart. It was more aggressive and was able to outcompete in terms of food.”

The study came from McGill University of Montreal, using genetically modified salmon eggs provided by Aqua Bounty.

Tarr has written a letter to the Commissioner of the federal Food and Drug Administration asking that she consider the McGill study when deciding whether to approve Aqua Bounty’s application to sell genetically engineered salmon for human consumption.

“I’m not sure if it was a form letter or not, but I did get a response this time that the letter had been passed on to the appropriate people. And it’s a couple of people I had previously had a meeting with, before the April 26th deadline, we had a meeting with about 12 top FDA officials. And so I know that letter was forwarded on. So I’ll be interested to see how they respond to it. I think it’s significant enough information that it should be part of the record for this application.”

Tarr added that she plans to introduce bills during the next legislative session requiring the labeling of all genetically modified foods in Alaska, as many other states have done.