

## Canadian environmentalists challenge GM salmon egg production

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Ecological groups will argue in Federal Court that a decision by Environment Canada to approve the production of GM salmon eggs should be overturned. The Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society contend that the federal department did not follow its own legislated rules and conduct a full risk assessment before clearing a U.S. company to produce the eggs in Prince Edward Island.

Mark Butler of the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax said the risk is that if the GM salmon escape from land-based tanks, they could mix with wild stocks with unknown consequences. "Once that fish breeds with another wild salmon, you can never put the genie back in the box," he said before leaving for the two-day hearing in Ottawa.

Boston-based AquaBounty Technologies says it has developed a way to make Atlantic salmon grow twice as fast as normal by modifying eggs with genes from chinook salmon and an eel-like fish called the ocean pout. It has been seeking regulatory approval in the United States since 1995. And while neither Canada nor the U.S. has approved the fish for human consumption, Environment Canada's decision to green-light the manufacture of eggs in Souris, P.E.I., is seen as a significant milestone.

Butler said he hoped the case would be a chance for the newly elected federal government to change course on the approval.

In a November release, AquaBounty said Environment Canada's approval was based on a close study of its hatchery facility in P.E.I., and the opinion of a panel of independent scientific experts through the department of Fisheries and Oceans.

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