

# Frankenfish or Superfood?

Soc Gen 108

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### What is the Controversy?

In this interactive simulation, we will explore the controversy regarding the sale of the first genetically modified (GM) salmon (AquAdvantage) that was FDA approved in 2015 and marked safe for consumption.

#### The Case for Superfood

These fish grow twice as fast as wild salmon. Despite being genetically modified, they are considered biologically identical to wild salmon. They have great potential to help combat food insecurity because they can be sold at lower cost.

#### The Case for Frankenfish

However, these fish are transgenic (contain foreign genetic material), so their effect on the environment and human body is poorly understood. Furthermore, their existence is rooted in the corporatization and colonization of an animal sacred to indigenous people.

## Who Created the GM Salmon?

**AquaBounty** is a biotechnology company founded in 1991. Their ultimate vision is to create a "fresh, affordable Atlantic salmon that's ready to feed – and change – the world".

#### CONTINUE

"A Better Way to Raise Atlantic Salmon."



### Instructions

Throughout this interactive simulation, you will explore the world from the **perspective of a salmon**. You will start off as an egg, and grow into an adult salmon. This will comprise **five different stages**: roe, development, identity formation, maturation, and fate.

While growing up, you will face questions about your identity – do you want to end up as a **wild salmon or a genetically modified (GM) salmon**? What are the biological, social, legal, ethical, cultural, and economic implications of your decision?

Throughout the simulation, you will be able to click to continue your journey and think about your final fate!

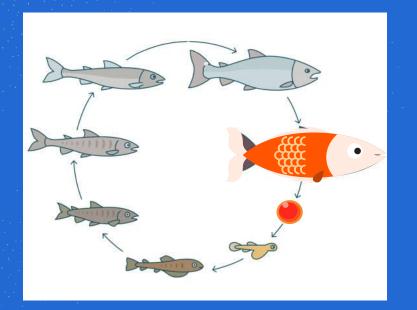


# Why Am I Important to Humans?

When I develop into a full grown salmon:

- I am a source of healthy protein for many humans!
- I contain high levels of omega-3 fatty acids!
  - This helps people reduce coronary heart issues
  - Having one serving of me per week can help reduce hart related deaths by 36% (Smith et. al., 2010)

I am also very **symbolic to indigenous communities** and I am used for sacred rituals!



CON



# Stage 2 Development



Now, since you have learned about the basics of your identity as a salmon, you will now be faced with important questions regarding your growth and development.

## Where Do You Want to Live?



#### Wildlife

Click on the following to learn more about the **benefits** of being a wild salmon!



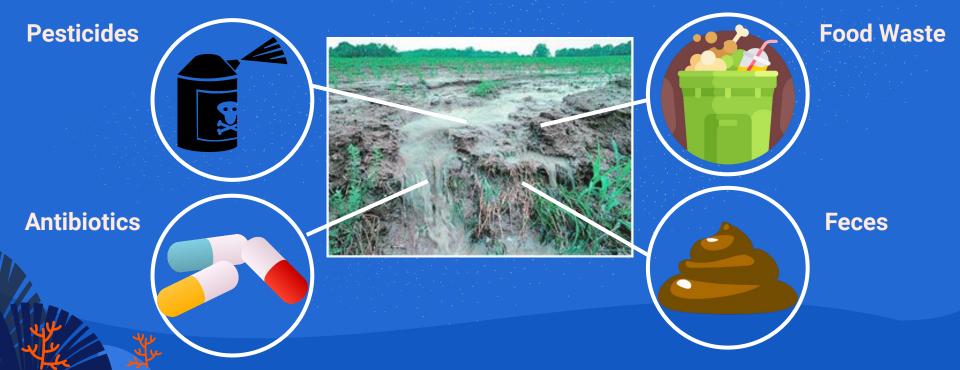






#### Lack of Farming Pollutants

Wild salmon often get to avoid many of the common pollutants affecting farmed and GM salmon, such as . . .



#### BACK

#### **Environmental Contributions**

Wild salmon make numerous contributions towards supporting their surrounding environment, such as by . . .

# Supporting Natural Ecosystems

- Acting as keystone species to support different energy chains
- Supporting plants and other organisms through release of nitrogen





#### Keeping Water Clean

- Essential part of maintaining stream flow
- By digging nests (redds), salmon help flush debris downstream to cleanse rivers and water sources

#### Wildlife

#### Click on the following to learn more about the dangers faced by wild salmon!





#### **Increased Water Temperatures**





Increased vulnerability to disease: higher risk of being infected by pathogens, leading to weakened survival skills Decreased ability to avoid predators due to warmer waters slowing down swimming speed of juvenile salmonids

#### **Ocean Acidification**



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Increase of toxins can impact embryonic development and lead to mortality and morphological abnormalities Disruption of habitats can lead to reduction in available food and resources

# Aquaculture

As a GM salmon, you will develop from an egg originally engineered at a facility on Prince Edward Island, Canada.







#### What type of environment will I live in?

The containment facility at AquAdvantage has a high level of security.

# Water Recirculation

The vast majority of water is recirculated, reducing discharge into the wild and subsequently the ability of a GM salmon to escape. Physical Security

All buildings are locked and have a large number of cameras and sensors to monitor activity.

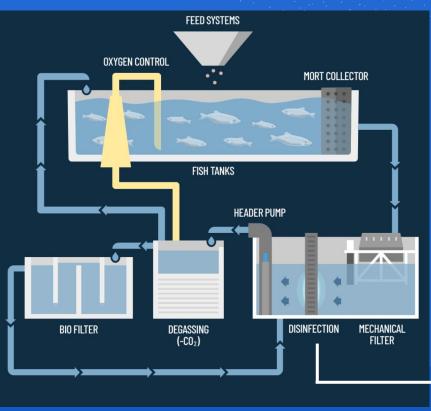


# SOPs and Inspection

Employees are trained to respond to emergency fish escapement and facilities are constantly inspected.

#### Water Recirculation

Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) used to raise GM salmon are designed to recirculate 99.7% of water



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Fish farming technology company **Innovasea** will design the new RAS for AquaBounty's newest facility in Ohio

UV light and ozone treatment are used as disinfectant

#### **Physical Security**



Nets, screens, filters, tanks, and covers prevent unwanted escape Lethal chemical (ex. chlorine pucks) and temperature conditions prevent escape

**Cameras and sensors** are checked 24/7 and **alarms** notify staff immediately







#### **SOPs and Inspection**



Ensure only authorized personnel are allowed to access and move throughout the facility



**Prevent potential predators** who could carry AquAdvantage salmon off-site from accessing the facility



Create **contingency plan** including backup measures in the event of an escapement



Thoroughly train all employees and staff and periodically conduct internal review



Outline **procedures** for cleaning, disinfection, equipment handling, and more

# What are some of the most important factors affecting my health?



#### Food and Water Quality

Sufficient water filtration and nutrition of feed are needed to mitigate stress Disease Monitoring

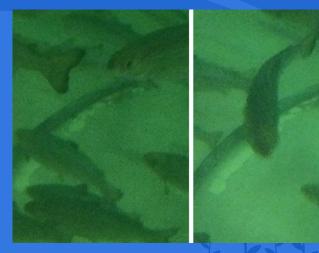
FIsh should be regularly monitored for disease and quarantined if needed.



Facilities should be kept clean and hygienic, and overcrowding should be avoided.

#### Should I be worried about these conditions?

A recent report exposing AquaBounty for poor containment conditions was released by #BlockCorporateSalmon, a BIPOC-led campaign to protect wild salmon.





Fiberglass particles are present in fish tanks and could be an irritant for fish eyes, gills, and skin High iron levels in well water used for feed could disrupt development of younger fish



#### What is preventing me from escaping?

A recent bipartisan bill (HR 273) has been introduced by Rep. Young (R-AK-At-Large), Rep. Bonamici (D-OR-1), and Rep DeFazio (D-OR- is 4) to prevent escapement of GM salmon.



GM salmon are not to be sold, transported, grown in a net-pen, or released into a natural environment.



Exception can be made if the fish are confined for research or if the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service review it first.



Enforcement will be done based on the 1976 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management.

## From egg to alevin to now

Now that you know more about the type of environment you'd live in as a wild vs GM salmon, please select the type of fish you'd like to continue your journey with.

Genetically Modified Salmon

Here in this journey, you'll be able to select traits that will enhance your journey Natural Wild Salmon

Here in this journey, you'll continue the natural life of a wild salmon

# Who am I?



Click on the icon that you would like to enhance your journey!

# Now that you're a genetically modified fish, what features would you like to enhance your journey?



**Growth hormone gene** for you to develop and mature at a much faster rate **Sterilization** to roam free without the worries of becoming an invasive species in a new environment or interrupting the genetic makeup of that population

\*Note that these are not the only features that make a salmon genetically modified, but for the purpose of our project we will be only covering these two features

## **Growth Hormone**

- Wow look at how big you've grown! With this growth hormone enhancer gene you'll not only grow and develop at a faster rate than all the salmon in the school, but you'll also be the biggest salmon and talk of the stream!
- Development for a typical salmon to reach full adulthood takes 18 months, however using a targeted hormone gene to genetically cross and recombine with an alternate phenotypic expression, growth and development rate will accelerate at a quicker time
- Research studies have inserted transgenes where Atlantic salmon can obtain the growth features of ocean pouts that speed up development and maturation without alternating their physical appearance (Du et al., 1992)

# Explore other features



# Sterilization

Why take a plan B? When you can be Plan Free! As a GM salmon you'll be able to not have to worry about spreading your seed across the streams! No worrying about disrupting the gene flow of mixed salmon populations or if that alevin is yours!

- Through gynogenesis and triploid techniques we can target your egg to sterilize you via chromosome duplication or develop an all-female line that will not result in reproduction of future generations
- Research has shown the great success of each technique in mitigating any disruption in the ecology and environment of salmon populations (Refstie et al., 1982)
- Warning: Side effects may include shorter survival and developmental rates and high mortality rate, and possible baby fever amidst your wild salmon friends

# Explore other features

In the case of Salomon vs Salena, Salomon you are NOT the father!

> W000 H00!

> > YESS

# Who am I?

- Now that you've chosen a life as a wild salmon, you will continue on your journey moving through streams and jumping through rapids to age and grow into the adult salmon you will become
- You'll develop a sense of persistence and perseverance as you develop at a longer rate than GM salmon, but your tenacity and willpower will be celebrated even amongst the visitors that enter your habitat





# Formation

Now that you are growing up, you will learn more complex questions regarding wildlife vs. GM salmon.



# What do I do in an escapement?

A huge storm has just weakened the structural integrity of a land-based aquaculture facility, resulting in a huge escapement of GM salmon! Whose perspective would you like to see?



## **Escapement into the Wild**

Click any of the following to learn more about the ability of wild and GM salmon to survive and reproduce (otherwise known as "fitness") in the wild!

#### Surrounding Habitat



#### Adult at sea Male spawner Cemale spawner Cemale spawner Kelt Cemale spawner Cemale spawner Cemale spawner Cemale spawner Cemale spawner Cemale spawner

Fecundity

#### Foraging Ability



DONE

#### Surrounding Habitat



- The water surrounding the Prince Edward Island facility is saltwater
- As Atlantic salmon are anadromous (live in freshwater and reproduce in saltwater), they cannot survive in saltwater until they undergo smoltification, involving:
  - Body shape modification
  - Increased reflectance
  - Increased ability for osmoregulation

**If you are a wild salmon,** you would only encounter GM salmon in the wild if they were mature. Either way, your survival is likely not at stake.

**If you are a GM salmon,** you would die unless you have already undergone smoltification.

## Fecundity

Triploid

#### **Ploidy of GM Salmon**

Diploid



Fecundity, or the ability of an offspring to reproduce, is prohibited by triploidy
 ~95% of GM salmon are triploid and sterile (abnormal chromosome number) following pressure shocking
 ~5% are diploid and capable of natural reproduction

**If you are a wild salmon,** you are diploid and can reproduce with other wild salmon but most likely not with GM salmon.

**If you are a GM salmon,** there is a 5% chance you could reproduce with wild salmon.

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### **Foraging Ability**

- GM salmon typically exhibit greater foraging ability than wild salmon
- However, they are more likely to exhibit riskier behavior, such as foraging despite the presence of predators



If you are a wild salmon, you might not be able to forage as well, but you'd have a stronger natural instinct for predator avoidance

If you are a GM salmon, you might be a good forager, but this could also get you killed!

#### Let's assume GM salmon became established in the wild. What now?

Please click on all of the following and click on "done" when you have finished exploring.

Reproduction with Wild Salmon

Competition with Native **Species** 



#### **Reproduction with Wild Salmon**

- Transgene spread can occur **vertically** (sexual transfer of genetic information), with natural selection following shortly after.
- As GM salmon generally have diminished fitness compared to wild salmon, they could introduce deleterious modifications into the wildlife gene pool.

# Poor swimming performance

Due to lack of need for strong swimming in captivity, GM salmon often do not swim as well as wild salmon.



#### Decreased predator avoidance

GM salmon tend to swim closer to the surface, exposing them to predation threats.



# More rapid development

As GM salmon develop more rapidly than wild salmon, they also emerge and become susceptible to predation earlier.

## **Competition with Native Species**

- Once escaped, GM salmon can increase the competition for limited resources and food.
- A transgene could . . .
  - Increase the range of environmental conditions the GM salmon can survive in. This could allow establishment in environments in which salmon are not normally found.
  - Enhance growth and nutrient use efficiency. This could allow salmon to better survive and proliferate than wild salmon.

BAC

 Establishment of GM salmon in a non-native environment could have downstream effects on predation and resource competition for both conspecifics and other species.

## **Secondary Toxicity**

Consumption of salmon with modified gene sequences could be hazardous to humans or animals (such as birds and other wildlife). These salmon could potentially have also acquired toxic agents while in their containment facility.

BAC

## **Disease Transmission**

As aquatic organisms, GM salmon have great dispersal ability. As a result, they also have great propensity for disease transmission. The following are some of the most common diseases and parasites found in Atlantic salmon.



**Sea lice infestation** 



#### **Red skin disease**



Salmon Rickettsial Disease



# How does the process of genetically modifying salmon work in aquaculture?

Click on each process to learn more about them!

#### Transgene Insertion

Transgene insertion and production occur when one inserts an exogenous or artificial gene into the targeted organisms genome via the DNA nuclei of the cell

#### Gynogenesis

A process in which the embryo genome originates exclusively from female origin, following embryogenesis stimulation by a male gamete (Portemer et al., 2015)

#### Triploidy

Sterile fish that have three sets of chromosomes, unlike fertile fish with two chromosomes

## **Transgenic Fish**

In this brief video, we explore the process of transgenic zebrafish that illuminate different fluorescent colors based on select genes, that provides a great understanding of how transgene insertion works. Although zebrafish are significantly smaller than salmon, this clip provides how this process of insertion in aquatic animals can be done!



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LEARN MORE

## **Transgenic Salmon in Research**

- Several studies have shown that this **process of inserting transgenes** into Atlantic salmon and other salminoids have been **successful**
- In one study researchers injected antifreeze protein gene promoters from ocean pouts into chinook salmon. As a result the amount of growth hormones in these new transgenic salmon were significantly greater than their control group of non transgenic salmon. (Du et al., 1992)
  - Furthermore, these salmon developed at a faster rate than the traditional salmon, as their growth rate within the year was up to 6 times greater than the non-transgenic salmon



## **Transgenic Salmon in Research**

- In a comparative analysis of wild type salmon and transgenic coho salmon, researchers explored and investigated the influence of a growth hormone transgene in the two groups (Kodama et al., 2018)
  - As both fish shared identical parental genetic background, researchers were able to identify whether it's the same loci or different loci that influences the phenotypic behavior of the wildtype and transgenic coho salmon.
  - From the sequencing and genetic mapping of each fish, researchers noted significant genetic alterations in the transgenic coho salmon that were associated with its phenotypic behavior

# Gynogenesis



- **Gynogenesis** is a form of asexual reproduction that can be used to either produce pure lines or **all female populations** where the genetic makeup is solely from the female parent (Donaldson & Devlin, 1996)
- In an experiment researchers wanted to determine the possibility of producing all sterile female using gynogenesis techniques in coho salmon (Refstie et al., 1982)
- **Results:** They successfully produced all sterile female in their experimental groups; however, the **diploid gynogenetic fish had a slower growth rate and higher mortality rate** than the controlled group of coho salmon

# **Triploid Fish**

- In this brief video, we learn the process of creating triploid fish (trout)
- Triploid fish are NOT genetically modified as there is no insertion or crossing of genes but rather the manipulation of chromosomes in the egg cells of these fish
  Triploid fish are generated for aquaculture and containment to protect biodiversity in native

habitats

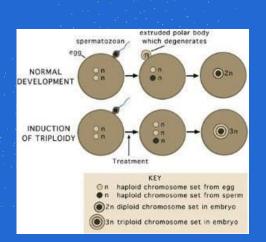




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# Triploidy Fish (cont'd)

- Much research and work developing these triploid fish has been used for GM salmon
- In one study, triploid progeny were produced in Atlantic salmon using moderate thermal shocks after fertilization (Quillet & Gaignon, 1990)
  - Gynogenetic yields were high, and all triploid groups had high survival and development rates, but were lower than control groups wild salmon
- In addition, the use of triploid fish have been used to help minimize the negative effects of genetic interactions and shifts between wild salmon and escaped farmed salmon (Cotter, et al., 2000)



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# How are GMO fish identified?

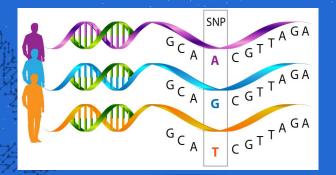
#### Trait identification via gene chip

A gene chip is a genomic tool that speeds up the identification of fish, or other sea creatures, that carry desired traits. Some of these include increased growth rates or resistance to disease and parasites.



#### SNP identification

A single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) is a genomic variant at a single base position in DNA. SNP arrays are a type of microarray that can detect single base changes.





## Wait, So, How Does it Work?

Okay here's how SNP array identification may work:

1. Find a sibling

2. Take a small tissue sample - such as a fin clipping (ouch, sorry!)

- 3. Puree and analyze it
- 4. Use SNP array assessment evaluate for desired traits
- 5. If optimal alleles are found, it can be selected for further breeding (lucky you?)

SNP arrays are routinely used to genotype rainbow trout and Atlantic salmon. However, genomic selection through these tools is quite expensive, so it will mostly be used to identify traits of high economic value.

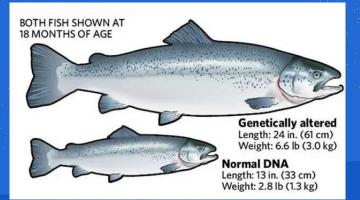


# New "family" of salmon?

By using these techniques, in November 2015, AquAdvantage became the first FDA approved transgenic animal "safe for consumption"

Scientists at AquaBounty Technologies combined Atlantic salmon, Pacific Chinook Salmon, and ocean pout to create me so that I am bigger & faster to grow!







# Maturation

Stage 4

Since you are now a mature salmon, you will be faced with philosophical questions to think about for your final fate- GM salmon or Wild Salmon- in terms of what you symbolize to consumers

CONTINUE

# What do I mean to consumers as a wild salmon?

#### Sustainability and Nutrition

#### Transparency and Social Responsibility

USDA Organic



## Sustainability and Nutrition



For many, consuming wild salmon is a practice of sustainability and environmental conscientiousness



Many people are for consuming wild salmon, because of its natural nutritional benefits and also for those that enjoy the sport of fishing and its delicious payoff after a day's reel

## Transparency and Social Responsibility

- In a <u>New York Times</u> article, **more than 75%** of pollers said that they **would not eat GM salmon**
- Many retail grocery stores and restaurant chains have refused to sell or serve GM salmon to customers along the lines of sustainability and staying transparent to build and retain that customer base and relationships
- There's a common thread of social responsibility in many of these companies mission statements that unveil the role of sustainability







# What do I mean to consumers as a GM salmon?

One of the common themes and threads of quantitative market research when it comes to genetically modified foods is the lack of transparency or knowledge that produces skepticism amongst consumers
 Click <u>here</u> to learn more about these common threads in GM Market Research!



## **GM Market Research**

- In a quantitative study, researchers surveyed participants asking questions about the labeling of GM salmon as well as the likelihood of them purchasing the product
  - People who were not informed about GM salmon are more likely to pay market price for organic, natural salmon. Those that were informed and received information about the GM salmon were more likely to purchase it at its value (Weir et al., 2021)
- Even in developing countries like Malaysia, research has shown many people are **concerned about this biotechnology** and have a greater bias towards nature and natural living things (Amin et al., 2014)
- Many argue the "playing God" trope as a sense of hostility and apprehensiveness, challenging the laws of nature

CONTINUE



## Are GM salmon safe to eat?

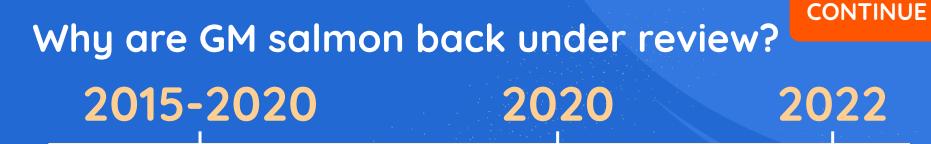
The FDA "determined that AquAdvantage Salmon meets the statutory requirements for safety and effectiveness"

Critiques emphasize that the FDA **did not perform intensive long-term research** on human health when approving AquAdvantage safe for consumption

With the consumption from any GM foods, there is always a risk of:

- a. Allergies: Transgenic techniques can cause new expression of proteins that can cause an allergic reaction (Watson et. al, 2016)
- b. Adverse health effects (ie, mortality, tumor formation, cancer, low fertility, organ abnormalities) (Shen et. al, 2022)
- c. Transfer of antibiotic resistance (Bawa et. al., 2012)





A coalition consisting of environmental justice, food safety, and fishing groups filed a lawsuit against the FDA, citing lack of evaluation for environmental consequences of AquAdvantage salmon

US District Court of Northern California judge ruled that the FDA must conduct further environmental assessment of the salmon to evaluate what would happen if it were to establish itself in the wild.

FDA released a draft environmental assessment and held a public meeting in December 2022







## CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY

Stage 5 Fate

In your last and final fate, you will be faced with social and cultural issues, where you will finally decide whether to choose to be a wild salmon of GM salmon

R.I.P.



#### How do You Want to Sacrifice your Life?

Now that you have learned about wild vs. GM salmon, choose how you want to sacrifice your life.

#### Native Ritual (Wild Salmon)

#### Help Fight Food Insecurity (GM Salmon)

# Help Fight Food Insecurity!

## 900 million people

Undernourished in 2013 (Qaim et. al, 2013)

## GM Salmon could:

1. Improve availability & accessibility of salmon due to faster growing stage and affordable pricing (Qaim et. al, 2013)

a. In the long-run, this can help reduce coronary heart issues on a global scale (Smith et. al, 2010)

CONTINUE

2. Influence food safety and quality

#### **GM Salmon: Fast Food?**

Since **GM salmon is cheaper and faster to develop** compared to wild salmon, you are being sold to a fast food company due to your cheap cost when bought in bulk.

Therefore, you'll most likely be in a \$2 fish sandwich

Now since you have learned about both perspectives from a GM salmon and Wild Salmon, do you want to end your fate or learn about native rituals?

Click here to be sold to a fast food restaurant as a GM Salmon

Click Here to Learn about Native Rituals as a Wild Salmon



\*\*Note: this is not the only way GM salmon can be used. For the purposes of our project, we chose fast food\*\*

#### You Are at a Native American Ritual!

#### What your life will look like here:

Salmon is a very important part of Native American and Indigenous communities' spiritual and cultural identity, as they consider it a gift from their Creator.

Common practices include yearly special ceremonies and traditional salmon fishing.

Click here to learn more about specific native tribes!

"We need the salmon for our survival as a distinct people. It is so connected into our lives that if the salmon disappear, so will we."

Fertility Renewal Prosperity

What you symbolize:

### **Tribal Relationships to Salmon**



Click on the fish to see where you are!







CONTINUE

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## The Tlingit

- Occupants of the NW shores and islands of N. America from the Bering River to Dixon entrance
- Salmon stream ownership one of the most important forms of property
- Respect for salmon shown through: crying out a greeting when fish jump out of the water, singing and dancing for them as they enter streams, carefully handling them when harvesting, and releasing their spirit so they can return to their underwater and be reborn.





### The Ahtna

- Live in the Copper River valley above Miles Lake and in the upper Susitna valley to the West
- View animals and fish as spiritual forms who gave/give themselves to humans, are controlled by powerful spiritual being, and with whom relations are governed by rules called "engii," symbolizing power
  Wear special clothing as they perform welcome songs and dances during the arrival of salmon each year.



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### The Central Yup'ik



- Occupants of the region from the Nushagak River in Bristol Bay N and W to the coast of Norton Sound
- Believe that all living/other forms have spirits that are sentient, attentive, communicative, and volitional
- Salmon are honored in spiritual ceremonies conducted by the "angalquk" (shaman) who communicates with spiritual forces. The central Yup'ik wear masks during communal celebrations with dances and songs.



#### Woah, Where Am I Found?



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## Wild Salmon: Native Ritual (cont'd)

Now since you have learned about the perspective of a wild salmon, do you want to end your fate as a wild salmon used for a native ritual or do you want to learn more the GM salmon fate?

Click here to be sacrificed in a Native Ritual Click here to learn more about the GM Salmon fate



# **Congratulations!**



You have reached the end of your journey with us! Whether you have chosen life as a wild or GMO salmon, you are serving a valuable purpose to various communities.

Thank you and don't forget to just keep swimming!

## **Brief Summary**

Here's a short video that will provide you with a brief overview of GMO salmon and their possible future. After finishing the video, buckle down and brace yourself for the rest of the journey!

CONTINUE

The Future of Food

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