

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
MAINE

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United States Senate

Dear Andrew,

I agree with your concerns that the science did not support Atlantic salmon being designated as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)—as I argued when I was governor. In 1995, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) first proposed listing Atlantic salmon as threatened, I agreed that wild salmon should be saved; however, the effort should be led by the State of Maine and not federal agencies. USFWS initially agreed to this proposal; but, by 1999, the agency had changed their position and proposed listing Atlantic salmon as endangered. The argument I made against the listing was the same argument you made in your letter—inter-breeding between hatchery-raised salmon and wild salmon had wiped out the genetic uniqueness of the wild populations. I believed, then, as I still do now, that the designation was not based on sound science and the listing would only hurt the rural Maine economy.

In short, I share your desire to see Atlantic salmon moved from an endangered listing to that of being threatened, which would align with Canada's designation of the species. This would also allow for catch and release programs for Atlantic salmon—as you mention—bringing in new economic opportunities for Maine. While the USFWS typically considers the downlisting of species through the agency cooperation with independent species experts, federal and state agencies, and state biologists, there is a mechanism for a public delisting petition. If you have yet to do so, I encourage the Veazie Salmon Club to reach out to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, as well as the USFWS to discuss the organization's interest in downlisting Atlantic salmon.

Thank you, again, for reaching out to me; please let me know if I may be of service in the future.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angus", followed by a horizontal line.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator