

Findings and Decision - Renewal Application of Bear River First Nation for Experimental Site AQ#5004

1. Overview:

On January 5, 2021, the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NSDFA) received an application from Bear River First Nation to renew Experimental Aquaculture Licence and Lease #5004 (AQ#5004), as described below:

Table 1. Description of Experimental Aquaculture Licence and Lease #5004

Type: Marine	Size: 30.68 Ha
Number: AQ#5004	Cultivation Method: Suspended Shellfish Cultivation
Applicant: Bear River First Nation	Species: American oyster
Location: Annapolis Basin, Annapolis County	Proposed Term: Five year maximum with annual renewals

2. History

AQ#5004 was issued on April 8, 2020 for a one year term from March 10th, 2020 to March 10th, 2021.

3. Procedure

3.1 Performance Review

A review of the information submitted by the operator in support of their renewal application was completed. This review recommended that the site be renewed based on the technical and biological assessment. This performance review was completed on March 9, 2021.

4. Factors to be considered

AQ#5004 is an experimental aquaculture site located in the Annapolis Basin. For the proposed renewed tenure, Bear River First Nation will continue to ascertain whether this particular area of Annapolis Basin is conducive to Oyster farming using suspended cultivation methods. As an experimental site, the operator will assess the viability of survival and growth rates of oysters using OysterGro cages. If the experiment proves successful, it could bring economic prosperity to Bear River First Nation through commercial development of the licence and lease.

The applicant has been made aware of other fishery activities in the area of the site. There were no potential ecological concerns identified in the application with respect to negative impacts on other fisheries. There is no evidence that the renewal of AQ#5004 will have impacts on the sustainability of wild salmon. The operation of this site on an experimental basis will enable the operator to inform future decisions with respect to suspended shellfish cultivation. The information reviewed during the performance review did not indicate adverse impacts on the surrounding public waters.

AQ#5004 will be authorized to cultivate shellfish using suspended gear, and as such the gear must remain within the geographic boundaries of the site. Section 55 of the *Licence and Lease Regulations* requires an aquaculture licence holder to mark each of their sites in a manner determined by the Minister and keep each site marked during the term of their licence.

AQ#5004 is located in Annapolis Basin, Annapolis County and is located approximately 820 m

west from another experimental aquaculture operation, AQ#5003 also issued to Bear River First Nation and approximately 3 km west from AQ#5006, an experimental aquaculture operation, issued to Bear River First Nation. There is no evidence to suggest that the extent of existing aquaculture sites within the area has exceeded the carrying capacity of the area. AQ#5004 is licensed to cultivate shellfish species, and as such there is no evidence that shellfish aquaculture has impacts on the sustainability of wild salmon.

AQ#5004 is located in waters which are not eligible for direct shellfish harvest under the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP); therefore the existence of AQ#5004 does not negatively interfere with other shellfish harvesters. Bear River First Nation must adhere to all provisions of the CSSP, and cannot harvest product unless the classification of the site permits harvesting. No product is permitted to be sold from unclassified waters.

5. Decision

Based on the considerations above, Experimental Aquaculture Licence and Lease #5004 shall be renewed for a period of one year (March 10, 2021 to March 9, 2022). The issued documents shall be prepared in accordance with the standard operating documents of NSDFA, and shall be made publicly available subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

6. Conditions

In addition, the following conditions shall apply:

The operator shall adhere to the following site marking requirements:

- (a) mark all corners of the leased site with cautionary yellow buoys of a minimum of 60 cm in diameter;
- (b) mark all corners of the leased bottom with a cement block or similar device of a weight sufficient to ensure the cement block or device remains in place at all times; and
- (c) display the licence or lease number at 1 corner of the licensed or leased area.



Robert Ceschiutti
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Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

April 6, 2021

Date