

# Decision on Application to Renew a Marine Aquaculture Licence and Lease

## Application to the Administrator:

On May 15, 2023, the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (the “Department”) received an application to renew Experimental Aquaculture Licence and Lease #5010 (AQ#5010), as described below:

## Application Summary:

<b>Type:</b> Experimental Marine	<b>Size:</b> 10.89 HA
<b>Number:</b> AQ#5010	<b>Cultivation Method:</b> Marine cage
<b>Applicant:</b> We’koqma’q First Nation	
<b>Location:</b> North Aberdeen, Whycomomagh Bay, Inverness County	<b>Species:</b> Rainbow Trout
<b>Proposed Term:</b> One Year Licence/Lease	

## Site History:

AQ#5010 was first issued on August 23, 2019 for a one-year term (August 23, 2019 to August 23, 2020). AQ#5010 was renewed on September 15, 2020 for a second one-year term (August 23, 2020 to August 22, 2021). AQ#5010 was renewed on July 12, 2021 for a third one-year term (August 24, 2012 to August 23, 2022) and renewed on August 15, 2022 for a fourth one-year term from August 24, 2022 to August 23, 2023.

## Performance Reviews Conducted by Administrator:

A performance review was conducted on the aquacultural operation of site AQ#5010, pursuant to Sections 71-72 of the *Aquaculture Licence and Lease Regulations* (the “Regulations”). There were concerns raised following the performance review, related to the containment management portion of the licence and lease holder’s Farm Management Plan. Corrective actions were submitted to the Department and, following further discussions, were accepted by the Department as appropriate mitigation measures. Concerns were also raised related to the licence/lease holder’s compliance history. Equipment had been left along the nearby shoreline. Following notification of the issue, the licence/lease holder resolved the issue in a timely manner.

**Factors to be Considered (as set out in Section 3 of the Regulations):**

*The optimum use of marine resources*

AQ#5010 is an experimental aquaculture site located in Whycocomagh Bay. For the proposed renewed tenure, We'koqma'q First Nation will continue to ascertain whether this particular area of Whycocomagh Bay is conducive to marine trout farming. The planned experimental nature of AQ#5010 relates to testing the effectiveness and efficiencies of using larger (60m/100m) cages for rainbow trout aquaculture by comparing fish production characteristics and production costs with those of traditional size cages. Results from the previous years of the experimental operation indicate success relative to the experimental objectives.

*The contribution of the proposed operation to community and Provincial economic development*

We'koqma'q First Nation presently operates an integrated trout farming operation in the western portion of Whycocomagh Bay, and the continued operation of AQ#5010 will further enhance their trout farming capabilities. Increased trout farming capacity should also allow for increased benefit to their hatchery and trout processing operations. As such, the continued experimental activities present an opportunity for economic development in the surrounding area.

*Fishery activities in the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation*

As this is an application to renew an existing Aquaculture licence and lease, there are no expected novel impacts to the fishery activities in the public waters near the existing site.

*The oceanographic and biophysical characteristics of the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation*

Whycocomagh Bay is known to experience low oxygen, occasional high temperatures and ice cover. Mitigation measures are in place to address oxygen and temperature. The site is seasonal and fish are harvested or transferred to the overwintering site at AQ#0814x prior to ice formation during the winter months.

*The other users of the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation*

As this is an application to renew an existing Aquaculture licence and lease, there are no expected novel impacts to the other users of the public waters near the existing site.

*The public right of navigation*

The operator shall adhere to the site marking requirements according to their Notice of Works issued by Transport Canada under the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*, reference number NPP#2019-200108.

*The sustainability of wild salmon*

The continued operation of this site is not expected to encumber salmon restoration or recovery efforts within the surrounding area.

*The number and productivity of other aquaculture sites in the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation*

AQ#5010 is located along the northern side of Whycocomagh Bay. The closest aquaculture site is approximately 1.5km south (AQ#5013), also issued to We'koqma'q First Nation for marine cage cultivation of finfish. Within Whycocomagh Bay, there are a total of 3 commercial finfish sites, 2 commercial shellfish sites and 2 experimental finfish sites. There is currently no indication that the continued operation of AQ#5010 will negatively impact the productivity of other aquaculture sites in the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation.

**Decision:**

Based on the factors considered above, Aquaculture Licence and Lease #5010 shall be renewed for a fifth and final one-year term (August 24, 2023 to August 23, 2024)

The Licence and Lease documents shall be prepared in accordance with the Department's standard operating documents and shall be made publicly available subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.



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Robert Ceschiutti  
Aquaculture Administrator  
Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

July 19, 2023

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Date