

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 #5013 (AQ#5013), as described below:

Application Summary:

Type: Experimental Marine	Size: 34.42 HA
Number: AQ#5013	Cultivation Method: Marine cage
Applicant: We’koqma’q First Nation	
Location: South Aberdeen, Whycomomagh Bay, Inverness County	Species: Rainbow Trout
Proposed Term: One Year Licence/Lease	

Site History:

AQ#5013 was first issued on September 27, 2021 for a one-year term (September 14, 2021 to September 13, 2022). The licence and lease were renewed on August 15, 2022 for a second one-year term (September 14, 2022 to September 13, 2023).

Performance Reviews Conducted by Administrator:

A performance review was conducted on the aquacultural operation of site AQ#5013, pursuant to Sections 71-72 of the *Aquaculture Licence and Lease Regulations* (the “Regulations”). There were no concerns raised following the performance review.

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

The optimum use of marine resources

AQ#5013 is an experimental aquaculture site located in Whycomomagh Bay. For the proposed renewed tenure, We’koqma’q First Nation will continue to test and validate the application of a diagenesis model for the prediction of sulfide levels in Whycomomagh Bay.

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 Whycomomagh Bay, and the continued operation of AQ#5013 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

Whycomomagh 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#2021-204291.

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#5013 is located along the southern side of Whycomomagh Bay. The closest aquaculture site is approximately 1.5km north (AQ#5010), also issued to We'koqma'q First Nation for marine cage cultivation of finfish. Within Whycomomagh 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#5013 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 #5013 shall be renewed for a third one-year term (September 14, 2023 to September 13, 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*.



Robert Ceschiutti
Aquaculture Administrator
Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

July 19, 2023

Date