

# Building an aquaculture coastal classification system

The Nova Scotia Government is creating a mapping tool to screen and rate coastal waters based on how suitable they may be for aquaculture development.

Screening will be completed for the top four species produced in Nova Scotia:

- Atlantic Salmon
- Rainbow Trout
- Blue Mussels
- American Oysters

This new mapping tool will help highlight areas that may be suitable for different types of aquaculture development. It will also identify areas where aquaculture cannot take place, such as restricted areas.

The screening assessments are not decision-making assessments. For an operator to obtain approval on an application, a more detailed farm-site assessment is still required – including the opportunity for public input and First Nations consultation.

## What makes an area suitable for aquaculture development?

Selecting a location for an aquaculture farm involves reviewing a lot of important information. This includes specific rules, requirements, or conditions related to:

- site characteristics that affect the health and growth of the farmed species
- site characteristics that influence the aquaculture gear and operations
- other uses of the marine space
- environmental protection and conservation
- laws, regulations, and policies

While there are many important restrictions and considerations that must be reviewed during site selection and the regulated licensing and leasing process, there are limits to the type of information that can be included in the screening assessments.

## What information will be included?

The Centre for Marine Applied Research (CMAR), a division of Perennia Food and Agriculture Corp., is providing scientific support to the development of the mapping tool. This includes helping to determine the types of information (criteria) that will be used to screen coastal waters for each type of aquaculture development.

The criteria will be used to evaluate an area's potential suitability for aquaculture development. For example, criteria may include anchorage areas, water depth and water temperature.

CMAR is using a science-based method to select the recommended criteria for the screening assessments. To be included, criteria had to be associated with the assessment's objectives and had to pass eight specific tests:

1. **Relevance:** The science is clear that it influences suitability for aquaculture development.
2. **Rateability:** The science is clear on how it influences suitability.
3. **Clarity:** Its influence is easy to understand and explain.
4. **Scale:** It can be assessed on a broad scale.
5. **Data Accessibility:** The required data can be collected within project timelines.
6. **Coastal Coverage:** The data is available for all of Nova Scotia's near-shore coastal waters.
7. **Measurement Reliability:** It can be accurately measured within project timelines.
8. **Redundancy:** It is different information and not already covered by other criteria.

The public will be invited to provide comment on the list of criteria recommended by CMAR.

## Stay Informed

A project update report with an overview of the selected criteria (specific restrictions and considerations) will be published online. A survey will also be posted online for public feedback.

For more information, go to

<https://novascotia.ca/coastal-classification-system-engagement/>

Contact us at [coastalclassificationsystem@novascotia.ca](mailto:coastalclassificationsystem@novascotia.ca)

Last Updated: December 18, 2024