

**Aquaculture Regulatory Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary**

May 5, 2021

1:00pm-2:00pm

Microsoft Teams

Attendance:

Province of Nova Scotia

Minister Colwell, Fisheries & Aquaculture

Ms. Jessica Feindel –Manager Aquaculture Operations

Mr. Robert Ceschiutti –Manager of Aquaculture Operations

Ms. Amanda Spencer – Licensing Coordinator

Ms. Amanda Swim – Aquatic Animal Health Veterinarian

Mr. Nathaniel Feindel – Manager of Aquaculture Development

Mr. Bruce Hancock – Executive Director

Ms. Janet MacKinnon – Director, Regional Integration of Compliance and Operations

Nova Scotia Environment

Mr. Aaron MacMullin – Senior Corporate Policy Strategist

Committee Members:

Chief Terrance Paul – Co-Chair

Mr. Jeff Nickerson – Cooke Aquaculture

Mr. Paul Budreski – Aquadelights Seafood Limited

Mr. Carl Purcell -NS Salmon Association

Mr. Tom Smith – Executive Director, Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia

Mrs. Lisa Dahr- Tourism Association of Nova Scotia

Mr. Bruce Morrison, Victoria County

Mr. Stewart Lamont, Tangier Lobster

Guests:

Dr. Gregor Reid – CMAR

Regrets:

David Gray, Faculty of Agriculture, Dalhousie University

Lloyd Robicheau, LFA 32 Lobster Fisherman

Meeting Summary:

1. Welcome and Introductions (Minister Colwell & Chief Paul)

The meeting started at 1:02pm with welcome and introductions. Minister Colwell noted it had been sometime since the last meeting due to COVID-19 challenges for the committee and scheduling conflicts. He noted that although this meeting is only scheduled for one hour, he assured members there would be a much more fulsome committee meeting in the very near future.

Minister Colwell informed the committee that it is important to review the aquaculture regulations as five years have passed, and the Terms of Reference of the committee state a comprehensive 5-year review should take place in five-year increments.

Chief Paul and Minister Colwell noted that COVID-19 has been a very concerning issue and reminded everyone to stay home.

2. Review of Previous Meeting Summary (Executive Director, Bruce Hancock)

The meeting summary from the last meeting was approved by the Committee unanimously.

3. Update on Containment Management

The Manager of Development for the department, Nathaniel Feindel, provided an update to the committee on the third year of the lobster telemetry study which investigates potential impacts finfish farms may have on lobsters. As well as tracking the movement of lobster to determine how that may be influenced by the fish farm, the research also looks at the stomach content of the lobster to determine its physiological status and determine if there are differences depending on proximity to the fish farms.

Mr. Feindel went on to inform the committee on the updated containment management framework for industry. Key aspects of the framework include the requirement for marine finfish operators to utilize certified engineers to design the structures being used for farming and that they consider the oceanographic and environmental conditions of the area. The engineering design must include a risk assessment that incorporates recognized standards or best practices. Operators must also have a fish marking plan in place that will enable escaped fish to be traced back to the operator. The plan must be auditable and consider animal welfare.

There was a question on when operators will have to implement the updated containment management plan. Mr. Feindel noted that the framework has different implications for both new and current operators and the department is addressing those appropriately.

The Province is working with current growers on their marking plans and engineering approvals to implement these requirements over an appropriate time frame. Engineered approvals and marking plans must be in place prior to stocking sites and post decision by the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review Board or Aquaculture Administrator for the following: new site applications, adjudicative amendments, experimental applications or assignments of sites from one operator to another.

4. Update on Operations & Farm Management Plans (FMP's) - Manager of Aquaculture Operations, Jessica Feindel

Mrs. Feindel provided a brief overview of the Aquaculture Operations section with updates on new components of the regulatory framework for public engagement, noise management, site marking requirements, and land based effluent monitoring.

A discussion was had on public engagement. There will be an addition to the FMP on identifying how information will be shared, community feedback, and how complaints will be responded to. A question was raised on what would be required for existing sites. It was noted that if a current process exists for the license holder, it will need to be documented in the FMP.

Minister Colwell informed committee members of the importance of having open dialogue and transparency among the industry and the public.

Mrs. Feindel provided the committee with an update on noise management. Operators are currently required to adhere to a strategy to minimize noise on site. The Operations division is currently working on drafting a policy around enhanced noise management. They have been collaborating with other jurisdictions on industry best practices.

Mrs. Feindel informed the committee on marine site marking requirements. Currently rules require sites to be marked as per Transport Canada requirements, as well as NSDFA requirements, which are often dissimilar. NSDFA will be adopting the Transport Canada requirements by April 1, 2022. It was noted that the marking requirements are site specific. A letter will be sent to license holders with more information on this requirement.

Land based effluent monitoring is currently part of the regulations and the Aquaculture Operations team is working with the Centre for Marine Applied Research to develop an effluent monitoring program.

5. Update on Aquaculture Decisions - Manager of Licensing & Leasing, Robert Ceschiutti

Mr. Ceschiutti provided an update on aquaculture decisions. It was noted that there were many renewals of existing sites in 2020. The department will see less renewals each year as they move to longer terms. He also noted that the first adjudicative applications were approved through the Aquaculture Review Board.

There was a discussion on experimental sites. The applications follow the administrative process. An option to lease is not required for experimental. It was noted that experimental sites are temporary and require a renewal every year and can be renewed for up to five years. The purpose of experimental is to perform testing to see if the area is suitable for full scale commercial. It was further discussed that for an experimental site to be converted to a commercial site, it would be required to go through the full adjudicative process.

6. Other Business

Minister Colwell thanked presenters for their presentations and work in enhancing a regulatory framework to grow the industry sustainably in a transparent manner.

Minister Colwell also introduced and welcomed Stewart Lamont of Tangier Lobster as a new member of the committee. Minister Colwell informed the committee that some members have stepped back from the committee and new members will be appointed soon.

Minister Colwell informed the members that another meeting will be taking place very soon and looks forward to the ongoing dialogue.

7. The meeting adjourned at 2:02PM.