

**Findings and Decision- Renewal Application of Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited for AQ#0025**

**1. Overview:**

On February 23, 2016, the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NSDFA) received an application from Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited to renew Aquaculture Licence and Lease #0025 (AQ#0025), as described below:

Table 1. Description of Aquaculture Licence and Lease #0025

<b>Type:</b> Marine Shellfish	<b>Size:</b> 10.16 HA
<b>Number:</b> AQ#0025	<b>Cultivation Method:</b> Suspended shellfish method
<b>Applicant:</b> Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited	<b>Species:</b> Blue mussel, Giant sea scallop and European oyster.
<b>Location:</b> Ship Harbour, Halifax County	<b>Proposed Term:</b> 10 year Licence/20 year Lease

**2. History**

AQ#0025 was first issued to Little Harbour Fisheries on June 19, 1991 for a ten year term (June 19, 1991 to June 19, 2001). AQ#0025 was amended on Septmeber 16, 1991 to allow for the cultivation of Giant sea scallops and European oysters. AQ#0025 was assigned on June 17, 1992 from Little Harbour Fisheries to Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited. AQ#0025 was renewed on May 2, 2001 for a five year term (June 19, 2001 to June 19, 2006). AQ#0025 was renewed on July 11, 2006 for a five year term (June 19, 2006 to June 19, 2011). AQ#0025 was renewed on November 21, 2011 for a five year term (June 19, 2011 to June 18, 2016).

**3. Procedure**

*3.1 Performance Review*

A performance 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 is required pursuant to Subsection 72(c) of the Aquaculture Licence and Lease Regulations, and was completed on April 26, 2016.

*3.2 Public Comment Period*

Notice of the application for the renewal of AQ#0025 for the 30-day public comment period was published on NSDFA's website (<http://novascotia.ca/fish/aquaculture/public-information/>) for the period of April 28, 2016 to May 27, 2016. Notice of the application was also published in the Royal Gazette Part I on April 27, 2016, May 4, 2016, May 11, 2016, and May 18, 2016.

*3.3 Submissions*

Zero submissions were received by NSDFA during the 30-day public comment period.

**4. Factors to be considered**

AQ#0025 is one of nine shellfish aquaculture sites currently held by Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited. Records indicate consistent production and resultant employment. The renewal plan indicates continued production is planned for this site and therefore resulting employment. The operator contributes to the local economy through their processing and shipping facility and relationships with other Nova Scotia seafood companies. Should the operator not operate the site as indicated, the Department's site utilization review procedures will be triggered.

The performance review and subsequent public comment period did not note the presence of other fishery activities in the area of the site. There were no ecological concerns identified in the past performance of this site with respect to negative impacts on other fisheries. Records indicate impacts of invasive species and duck predation, with mitigation efforts on-going to address these challenges. AQ#0025 is licensed to cultivate shellfish species, and as such there is no evidence that shellfish aquaculture has impacts on the sustainability of wild salmon. The successful growth of blue mussels in Ship Harbour is proven. The information reviewed during the performance review did not indicate adverse impacts on the surrounding public waters.

There are no recorded instances on file of AQ#0025 interfering with other users of the public waters surrounding the operation. AQ#0025 is 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 (see below) and keep each site marked during the term of their licence. Ensuring that the required site markings are in place will be a focus of on-going site monitoring.

AQ#0025 is located in the upper region of Ship Harbour, and is the aquaculture site furthest into the harbour. AQ#0025 is located in the nearshore environment, within 40 metres of the shoreline on the northern boundary and within 450 on the western boundary. The centre of AQ#0025 is within 1.0 km of three additional aquaculture sites, all isused to Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited. The physical separation of AQ#0025 from the shoreline and neighbouring aquaculture sites provides for multiple corridors within the harbour. There is no evidence to suggest that the extent of existing aquaculture in the harbour has exceeded the carrying capacity of the harbour.

## **5. Decision**

Based on the considerations above, Aquaculture Licence #0025 shall be renewed for a period of 10 years (June 19, 2016 to June 19, 2026) and Aquaculture Lease #0025 shall be renewed for a period of 20 years (June 19, 2016 to June 19, 2036).

The Licence and Lease documents shall be prepared in accordance with the standard operating documents of NSDFA, and shall be made publically available subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

## **6. Conditions**

In addition, the following condition shall apply:

Aquaprime Mussel Ranch Limited 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.

*Brennan Goreham*

**Brennan Goreham**  
**Aquaculture Administrator**  
**Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture**

*7/5/16*

**Date**

