

## **Findings and Decision - Renewal Application of We'koma'q First Nation for AQ#0716**

### **1. Overview:**

On October 26, 2020, the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NSDFA) received an application from We'koma'q First Nation to renew Aquaculture Licence and Lease #0716 (AQ#0716), as described below:

Table 1. Description of Aquaculture Licence and Lease #0716

<b>Type:</b> Marine Finfish	<b>Size:</b> 22.97 HA
<b>Number:</b> AQ#0716	<b>Cultivation Method:</b> Marine Cage
<b>Applicant:</b> We'koma'q First Nation	<b>Species:</b> Atlantic salmon and Rainbow trout
<b>Location:</b> Arichat Harbour, Richmond County	<b>Proposed Term:</b> 10 year Licence/20 year Lease

### **2. History**

AQ#0716 was first issued to St. Peters Fish Hatchery Limited on June 20, 2011 for a ten year term (April 29, 2011 to April 28, 2021). AQ#0716 was assigned on July 22, 2019 from St. Peters Fish Hatchery Limited to Waycobah First Nation Band Council.

### **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(d) of the Aquaculture Licence and Lease Regulations and was completed on March 29, 2021.

#### *3.2 Public Comment Period*

Notice of the application for the renewal of AQ#0716 for the 30-day public comment period was published on NSDFA's website (<http://novascotia.ca/fish/aquaculture/public-information/>) for the period of January 14, 2021 to February 15, 2021. Notice of the application was also published in the Royal Gazette Part I on January 20, 27, February 3 and 10, 2021.

#### *3.3 Submissions*

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

### **4. Factors to be considered**

AQ#0716 is located in Arichat Harbour, Richmond County, approximately 650 metres from the shoreline of the community of Arichat. AQ#0716 is approximately 350 metres from Jerseyman Island at its nearest point. There are two existing shellfish aquaculture sites also within Arichat Harbour. There is adequate separation between AQ#0716, the shoreline, and other existing aquaculture sites to allow for navigation. The site was assigned to the applicant in 2019. This

site is part of the applicant's larger development plans to expand its Rainbow trout productions in Cape Breton, NS. Should AQ#0716 not be operated as planned, the Department's site utilization review provisions will be implemented.

Seed source and feed will utilize local sources in Nova Scotia. The renewal of this site will support the opportunity for new infrastructure to be built locally or within the Province as part of a larger expansion plan.

The renewal application did not anticipate any changes to impacts on fisheries activities. The operator of AQ#0716 will be required to adhere to the navigation requirements of the Canadian Navigable Waters Act, including necessary site marking requirements.

The Farm Operations section of the Farm Management Plan for AQ#0716 will require the operator to indicate how they will operate AQ#0716 in accordance with industry best practices with respect to items such as interactions with wildlife, noise, maintain the site in good order, the removal of decommissioned farm supplies and equipment, and the retrieval of gear or debris that has broken loose. Any complaints received by the Province of Nova Scotia specific to a particular aquaculture site are reviewed by Nova Scotia Environment, with appropriate follow-up and prescribed actions taken if necessary. Additional information on Farm Management Plan requirements can be found at: <https://novascotia.ca/fish/documents/compliance-documents/Minimum-compliance-requirements-Marine-Finfish.pdf>

The Aquaculture Management regulations include regulatory compliance points with regards to aquatic animal health management. The operator is required to have comprehensive aquatic animal health procedures in place as part of the Farm Management Plan and is also required to adhere to the reporting and notification provisions regarding aquatic animal health management. The Farm Management Plan must include elements relating to finfish husbandry and welfare, veterinary care and disease surveillance practices, biosecurity measures, and emergency measures. The Containment Management Monitoring section of the Aquaculture Management Regulations require mandatory notification to the Department of breach events. In the event of an escape, the operator would be required to adhere to measures prescribed in the Farm Management Plan and in Regulation on escape reporting, auditing and mitigation.

The site is known to experience superchill. Production strategies will be in place to mitigate risk of superchill. Applicant has indicated in their Development Plan that fish will not be overwintered at this site, and site will be stocked with larger juvenile (300 g) in order to grow fish to market within the site's shorter production period.

The review of the application noted that there are no changes to the impacts on fisheries activities as a result of the renewal of this lease and licence. There were no ecological concerns identified in the past performance of this site with respect to negative impacts on other fisheries. The information reviewed during the review of the application did not indicate adverse impacts on the surrounding public waters.

Salmon run rivers have been researched and described in the application. River Inhabitants and River Tillard are within 19-20 km of the site. Middle River and Baddeck River are the closest index rivers both within 60 km of the site. Activities to support the sustainability of wild salmon have been described, including ongoing activities to support containment management. Salmon

populations in Middle River and Baddeck River are enhanced through a Provincial stocking program. The site will be required to meet the containment requirements of the Aquaculture Management Regulations and those required for BAP certification.

## **5. Decision**

Based on the considerations above, Aquaculture Licence #0716 shall be renewed for a period of ten years (April 29, 2021 to April 28, 2031) and Aquaculture Lease #0716 shall be renewed for a period of twenty years (April 29, 2021 to April 28, 2041).

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

## **6. Conditions**

In addition, the following condition shall apply:

The operator shall adhere to the following site marking requirements:

- a) Mark all corners of the leased site with cautionary yellow buoys of a minimum of 60cm in diameter;
- b) Mark all corners of the leased bottom with cement blocks or similar devices of a weight sufficient to ensure the cement block or device remains in place at all times; and
- c) Display the lease number at 1 corner of the leased area.



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**Robert Ceschiutti**  
**Aquaculture Administrator**  
**Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture**

**April 1, 2021**

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**Date**