

Decision on Application to Renew a Marine Aquaculture Licence

Application to the Administrator:

On April 28, 2025, the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (the “Department”) received an application to renew Aquaculture Licence #1313 (AQ#1313), as described below:

Application Summary:

Type: Marine	Size: 5.63 HA
Number: AQ#1313	Cultivation Method: Bottom without gear, bottom with gear, Suspended
Applicant: Joe Rankin	
Location: Mabou Harbour, Inverness County	Species: American Oyster
Proposed Term: 10 year Licence	

Site History:

Aquaculture Licence No. 1313 was first issued to Joe Rankin on November 1, 2005, for a 10-year term (November 1, 2005, to November 1, 2015), for the bottom without gear cultivation of American oyster on a 4.00 hectare area in Mabou Harbour, Inverness County. In April, 2011, the licence was amended to add the bottom with gear and suspended cultivation methods. In August, 2011, the licence was amended to modify the site boundaries, resulting in an increase in site size to 5.63 hectares. In April, 2016, the licence was renewed for a 10-year term (November 1, 2015 to November 1, 2025).

Performance Reviews Conducted by Administrator:

A performance review was conducted on the aquacultural operation of site AQ#1313, pursuant to Sections 71-72 of the *Aquaculture Licence and Lease Regulations* (the “Regulations”). There were concerns raised following the performance review which are summarized within the *Factors to be Considered* section of this decision document.

Public Submissions on Application to Administrator:

Pursuant to Section 41 of the Regulations, notice of the application was published on the Department's website and in the Royal Gazette Part I inviting the public to submit written comments on the application to the Administrator within the 30 days following the date the notice was published. This notice was published on September 10, 2025.

No (0) submissions were received by the Department during the 30-day public comment period.

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

The optimum use of marine resources

The performance review conducted by the Department raised concerns regarding recent utilization of the site. Historically, this site demonstrated appropriate utilization of the site. However, in 2024, the Conditional Management Plan (CMP) that had been in place for Mabou Harbour was not renewed under the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP, a joint operation managed by both the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)) due to poor water quality. As a result, no oysters can be harvested from this area until a suitable relay site has been identified, or a depuration facility has been established and approved by the CSSP. Movements of shellfish from this area is limited due to MSX in the Bras d'Or Lakes and recent findings of Dermo in the North Shore area.

The information in support of the application to renew the aquaculture licence suggests continued production is planned for this site and continued employment, should water quality improve or a location for relay/depuration is found. Department staff will continue to monitor that production plans are implemented as submitted and that the site is utilized for Aquaculture.

The contribution of the proposed operation to community and Provincial economic development

The proposed renewal did not involve any change to the operator's services and suppliers and did not involve any change to the operator's employment impact to the community. However, the current situation regarding water quality will have a negative impact to the economic development of the community and the Province, and has been taken into account when issuing this decision.

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. However, it is noteworthy that any historical commercial, recreational or aboriginal shellfish fisheries in Mabou Harbour in general will be negatively impacted by the current CSSP status.

The oceanographic and biophysical characteristics of the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation

The oceanographic and biophysical characteristics of Mabou Harbour continue to be a suitable environment for the growth of American oyster, water quality notwithstanding.

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 is required to 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#8200-09-2179.

The sustainability of wild salmon

There is no indication that continued operation of the site for shellfish aquaculture will pose ecological concerns or have an impact on the sustainability of wild salmon.

The number and productivity of other aquaculture sites in the public waters surrounding the proposed aquacultural operation

Aquaculture site no. 1313 is located in Mabou Harbour, opposite West Mabou Beach Provincial Park. There are no recorded instances on file of this site interfering with other aquaculture sites in the surrounding area. There is no evidence to suggest that the extent of existing aquaculture in the harbour has exceeded the carrying capacity of the harbour.

Decision:

Based on the factors considered above, Aquaculture Licence #1313 shall be renewed for a period of 10 years (November 1, 2025 to October 31, 2035).

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

October 20, 2025

Date