



Accountability Report 2019–20

Fisheries and Aquaculture



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Fisheries & Aquaculture for the year ended March 31, 2020 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Fisheries & Aquaculture Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Fisheries & Aquaculture management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Fisheries & Aquaculture management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department's 2019-2020 Business Plan.

Honourable Keith Colwell, E.C.N.S.
Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture

Loretta Robichaud
Deputy Minister

Message from Minister

Seafood continues to be Nova Scotia's number one export, representing 38 per cent of the province's export of goods in 2019. Tens of thousands of Nova Scotians are directly employed in our fishery, building good careers and raising families here. This is a key to growth and better economic future of our province.

The quality of our lobster continues to improve because of improvements in training, including the Lobster Handling Course 3.0 and initiatives like the Lobster Quality Certification Pilot. In addition, we are providing \$2.5 million to the Université Sainte-Anne to establish the Lobster Quality Research and Innovation Centre.

Industry is receiving great support from the Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board, which invested more than \$61 million into our growing rural economy. With its updated regulations, the Board has improved service times for loans between \$2 and \$5 million, reduced service fees and expanded its lending programs to more areas of the industry. The Board supported industry through the onset of COVID-19 by providing flexibility to clients that felt the financial impact of the pandemic.

Aquaculture is an important economic contributor to Nova Scotia's rural and coastal communities and the growing success of Nova Scotia's seafood exports. Our province has one of the best sets of regulation and legislation for aquaculture in the world, and we continue to create ways to help the industry to grow in a responsible and sustainable way. Our Aquaculture Growth Strategy supports significant research and development projects that are having positive impacts on the sector.

The Atlantic Fisheries Fund continues to encourage innovation and is helping our fisheries and aquaculture industries remain strong, prosperous, and sustainable for generations. Industry participants have access to new technologies and equipment. The Atlantic Fisheries Fund has been a game changer for Nova Scotia and I am excited by the level of industry participation and its passion to better meet market demands.

Last year, more than 67,000 people participated in sportfishing, making it one of the province's most popular outdoor sports. We made great progress on our sportfish marketing strategy and brand identity which will roll out in 2020-21. The Department also engaged the Nova Scotia Guides Association to initiate a series of training workshops aimed at increasing the professionalization and marketing potential of fishing guides.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Keith Colwell, E.C.N.S.
Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture

Financial Results

	2019-2020 Estimate	2019-2020 Actuals	2019-2020 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)		
Departmental Expenses:			
Administration	653	410	(243)
Aquaculture	5,530	5,811	281
Inland Fisheries	2,509	2,956	447
Marine Fisheries	12,844	12,331	(513)
Total Departmental Expenses	21,536	21,508	(28)
Additional Information:			
Revenues	794	743	(51)
Fees and Other Charges	1,001	960	(41)
Ordinary Recoveries	500	463	(37)
Total: Fees and Recoveries	2,295	2,166	(129)
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	70.7	66.3	(4.4)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanations:</u> Miscellaneous decreases across the Department.			
<u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u> Miscellaneous decreases across the department.			
<u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u> nil			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> Unfilled positions mainly related to Marine.			

Measuring Our Performance

Atlantic Fisheries Fund

The Atlantic Fisheries Fund is a cost-shared seven-year, \$421 million partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Atlantic provinces to further develop a culture of innovation in the fish and seafood industries. Nova Scotia committed to invest \$37.95 million in the Atlantic Fisheries Fund over the duration of the seven years. The Fund aims to support projects that increase productivity, competitiveness, quality and sustainability of the seafood sectors, as well as enhance capacity to adapt to ecosystem shifts, particularly related to climate change.

In 2019-20, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture approved \$14.7 million in provincial funding for over 130 projects. This investment leveraged \$25.3 million in federal cost-shared dollars, plus additional industry contributions, in support to the seafood, fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Nova Scotia. Examples of this support include:

- Exporting companies upgrading their current in-house paper data entry systems into an integrated entry system that facilitates traceability and ensures supply chain transparency.
- Lobster harvesters adopting technologies to improve holding conditions on board their vessels to maximize product quality and value.
- Shrimp and groundfish harvesters implementing harvest monitoring technologies to reduce bycatch and improve quality of landed product.
- Shellfish aquaculture operators improving grow-out methods and adopting equipment and technologies to enhance productivity of their operations.
- Fish and seafood processors and exporters implementing automated technologies and innovative solutions to produce high-value and high-quality products.
- Perennia Food and Agriculture Limited (Perennia) received funding for separate projects to develop quantifiable quality standards for top selling Nova Scotia seafood species, and to quantify the wave and current climate around coastal Nova Scotia for aquaculture decision-making.
- Several industry associations conducting scientific activities in support of the development of sustainable harvesting, processing and aquaculture technologies, and to research the impacts of ecosystem shifts on fish stocks.

Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund

A secondary federal/provincial partnership of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund is the Canadian Fish and Seafood Program for marketing initiatives, valued at \$38.6 million nationally, over seven years. Provinces participating in the Program are required to contribute 30% of project funding. In 2019-20, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, along with the Federal government and other participating Provinces and Territories, supported five projects under the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunities Fund with a total value of approximately \$3.7 million. These projects aim to support domestic and international activities relating to awareness, promotion, and marketing of Nova Scotia's fish and aquaculture products.

Building Tomorrow Fund

This fund commits a provincial investment of \$9 million over three years to be split equally between agriculture and fisheries and aquaculture projects. In 2019-20, investments were made for three new projects. This includes investments in recreational sportfishing of \$400 thousand to develop a product that will connect visitors to high quality guided fishing opportunities and attract more anglers to the province, export diversification for seafood products and development of the Lobster Centre of Excellence at Université Sainte-Anne.

Aquaculture Growth Strategy

Aquaculture continued to be a strategic focus for the Department, driving economic growth to rural areas of the Province. Nova Scotia is well positioned to grow this industry and meet an increasing demand for quality, sustainable seafood. The Department's efforts have been focused on maximizing the production from existing sites and building a framework to support the identification and development of new farming locations. Production from existing sites has grown significantly from the beginning of the Growth Strategy, with 2019 farm gate value estimated to reach \$80 million. The Department has received numerous applications for new site development over the past year which are currently in the review process. In addition, the Department has been working with the Municipality of Argyle through an Memorandum of Understanding to develop an Aquaculture Development Area. This collaborative approach will pre-identify potential areas and facilitate growth by reducing the administrative burden to industry applicants.

In 2019-20, the Department invested over \$2.8 million in its final year of the four-year, \$11.2 million Aquaculture Growth Strategy. This included \$2.27 million in new research and development projects for 2019-20. Projects supported the development, trial, and assessment of new technology for both the marine finfish and shellfish industries. It also included the assessment of seed sources for landbased facilities and hatchery options for the shellfish industry. Other achievements in 2019-20 included the initiation of an aquaculture and lobster interactions study as well as the collection of data from the marine environment and facilities around Nova Scotia, to support the continued development of the industry.

Seafood Export Marketing Program

The Department continued to seek new ways to grow sales in the domestic market while aggressively pursuing new export markets and business opportunities in Asia, Europe and the United States. Market development efforts focused on education, increasing consumer awareness and developing new distribution channels such as retail, food service and e-commerce. Promotional initiatives incorporated key messaging with an emphasis on wild stocks, health benefits, quality and taste. Product versatility using Nova Scotia seafood was showcased during chef demonstrations, competitions, media and food blogger events and consumer tastings.

In 2019-20, initiatives included:

- In April 2019, the Premier launched the Canada – European Engagement strategy aimed at fostering stronger connections and promoting our top-quality products, including seafood.
- Supported Nova Scotia seafood companies during international trade missions profiling Nova Scotia companies and their premium quality products. Also participated in

business-to-business meetings to introduce and support Nova Scotia seafood companies to develop key buyer connections in the marketplace:

- Seafood Expo Global – Brussels – May 2019.
- China Fisheries and Seafood Expo - Qingdao - November 2019.
- Atlantic Canada Seafood Business to Business Export Cafés in Singapore, Japan, Vietnam and Portugal.
- Supported a series of market development activities internationally with a focus on Asia, Europe and the United States.
- Worked with Nova Scotia companies to help establish new distribution channels while supporting food service, in-store retail and e-commerce promotions to showcase Nova Scotia Seafood products.
- Supported the development and execution of several inbound missions from China and Europe where Nova Scotia companies networked and showcased their products to potential buyers.

Expanding Trade Development Opportunities

Nova Scotia exported a record \$2.32 billion in 2019, up 14% from 2018. Our main seafood export destinations in 2019 were the USA (45%), China (32%) and the EU (10%). Our largest seafood export species by value was lobster at 52%, followed by crab, scallop, shrimp and halibut.



The Department continued to work to ensure international trade issues and market access opportunities were pursued in alignment with industry priorities. In December 2019, Canada, the United States and Mexico approved changes to the “new NAFTA”, clearing a path to ratification of the new Canada-United States Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and providing more stability with our largest trading partners.

Supporting Industry Capacity to Sell Seafood at a Higher Value

The following are examples of initiatives in 2019-20:

- An industry organization membership website template was developed and launched in the summer of 2019. The new template, piloted by an industry partner, was made available to fish harvester organizations across the province with the goal of increasing communication and accountability to their members.
- In partnership with Perennia and Université Sainte-Anne, the Department engaged with industry to implement the Nova Scotia Lobster Quality Certification Program. The program includes online and in-person training, best practices, guidelines and self-assessment check lists. In total, 13 companies have been prepared to deliver training within their respective organizations. One third of companies contacted expressed a desire to learn more about the program and its implementation. Presentations and new online materials continue to be developed to address unique industry perspectives and concerns. The Department also launched an incentive program to cover certification costs of early adopters.
- Continued participation and contribution to the Seafood Value Chain Roundtable whose objective is to increase value throughout the entire chain of all Canadian seafood.
- Invested \$44,950 in year four of the Catch to Plate initiative in which Perennia coordinated projects focused on maintaining the quality and increasing the value of live lobsters.
- In partnership with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), contributed \$30,000 towards an innovation competition for the development of a new lobster bait using seafood by-products.
- Continued support for industry-led lobster science initiatives including:
 - The Atlantic Lobster Moulting and Quality Program which collected data to assist industry in quality predictions for the Southwest Nova Scotia lobster seasons and feeds into a larger prediction model being considered by academia.
 - The Fishermen and Scientist Research Society Lobster Settlement and Lobster Recruitment Index projects which collect data on lobster abundance trends, stock distribution, size, exploitation rates and bottom temperatures with the goal of predicting increases or decreases of legal-sized lobsters for the commercial lobster fishery.
- In partnership with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia's Seafarmers Conference, the Department hosted the 22nd annual Minister's Conference in February 2020, attracting over 800 attendees and 77 exhibitors. These annual conferences are intended to foster industry collaboration toward shared interests with a specific focus on quality and excellence within the sector.

Live Lobster Handling Course

Promoting proper handling practices in the Nova Scotia lobster industry for exports continued into 2019-20. A new lobster handling course was developed and launched during the 2020 Minister's Conference. Building upon the success and information contained in the previous live lobster handling courses, the new course focused on the quality and economic impacts of proper lobster handling practices once the lobster lands on our shores, including transport, grading, live storage and packaging for export. As of December 2019, a total of 2,373 lobster handling certificates were held by industry members, representing both harvesters and buyer/processors.

Sportfishing Development

The Department continued to invest in the development of freshwater and marine sportfishing opportunities. In 2019-20, through core funding and the Building Tomorrow Fund, Inland Fisheries engaged a marketing company to develop a marketing strategy and brand identity for sportfishing in Nova Scotia. The first year of a two-year program included the development of a brand and promotional materials as well as a market development strategy. The department also engaged the Nova Scotia Guides Association to initiate a series of training workshops aimed at increasing the professionalization and marketing potential of fishing guides. The Department also built strategic partnerships with Tourism Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters and accommodations providers across Nova Scotia to build packages for angling and other outdoor activities for tourists.

Since the amendments made to licencing regulations in 2017-18, there have been increased licence sales and more non-residents engaged in angling:

- 3,011 non-resident general licenses and 1,110 non-resident salmon licenses were sold.
- Non-resident anglers accounted for 6.5% of all the provincial sportfishing licences for the 2019-20 season, compared to 4.1% in 2018-19 and 3.8% in 2017-18.
- Total licence sales included 64,514 general licences and 2,554 salmon licences.
- In 2019-20, salmon fishing licence sales were the highest since 2011.
- By adopting the definition of disability from the *Accessibility Act*, more anglers have taken the opportunity to qualify for no-fee licences and enjoy the health benefits of angling.

Perennia Partnership to Develop Greater Capacity in Fisheries and Seafood

The Province's partnership with Perennia supported a seafood accelerator program focused on increasing market access through food safety certifications and diversification through product development. This included advice and resource development, including sessions in enhancing retail relationships to increase sales, funding for food safety program implementation, market research and product testing for safety. To date, there have been:

- Five projects focused on new product development.
- Two projects aimed at overcoming identified technical obstacles within the companies.
- Six projects focused on gaining market access through certification processes.

Other development projects underway in 2019-2020 include:

- Sustainable development of Nova Scotia's sealing industry with a focus on humane harvest and full animal utilization.
- Development and prototype testing of a technology to determine the fullness and quality of lobster at various stages of the value chain starting on the vessel.
- Development of quality criteria, assessment tools and evaluation procedures for processed lobster to be certified to use the Nova Scotia Seafood Brand.

Labour Issues

The Department continued to champion labour issues in 2019-20 by working with other provincial departments, the seafood processing industry and the federal government to address persistent workforce challenges facing our provincial seafood industry.

In collaboration with government and industry partners, the Department piloted the *Team Seafood* student bursary program for the seafood industry to support efforts to address immediate labour shortages, with a longer-term goal of influencing future recruitment of young workers into the seafood sector. Ninety-five post-secondary and twenty-four high school students participated in the program with over \$54,000 contributed to Nova Scotia students working in the sector. The Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council promoted and administered this pilot program.

Labour programming continued to be an important topic at the 22nd Annual Minister's Conference in February 2020. The discussions focused on the automation of processes, the attraction and retention of labour, succession planning and ongoing labour initiatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these labour challenges in March 2020 with the delay in arrivals of Temporary Foreign Workers and the efforts to develop and implement health and safety protocols to prevent the spread of the disease.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board

The Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board were able to expand their focus to the processing sector while continuing to support new entrants into the commercial fisheries. After last year's promotional campaign, the board realized an increase in both the number of clients and the number of loans. The Board invested in the future of the rural economy through the financing of innovative vessel improvements and the construction of new modern vessels that focus on preserving high quality products.

Key core functions

Central functions of the Department were advanced in 2019-20 through initiatives including:

Sportfishing Programs and Management

The Department supported existing programs and activities that encourage youth, women and persons with disabilities to participate in sportfishing:

- Delivered 82 Learn to Fish sessions in 2019 with more than 1,900 young angler participants; the highest participation since the program began in 2006.
- The Becoming an Outdoors Woman program designed to increase female participation in fishing and hunting was offered in September 2019.
- Supported the sportfishing industry through the three provincial fish hatcheries by helping ensure Nova Scotians can participate in the provinces most popular outdoor activity.

- Approximately 200 lakes and streams were stocked in the spring of 2019 with trout and made trout available to support 55 fishing derbies that were sponsored by community organizations. In the fall of 2019, an additional 150 sites were stocked with trout.
- Over a quarter of a million Atlantic salmon parr and smolt were released into the Margaree River, Middle River (Victoria County) and West River (Antigonish County). Wild brood stock were collected from six rivers in the fall of 2019. The Department also released pre-spawn adult salmon into the West River Sheet Harbour as part of a novel smolt-to-adult supplementation program. These adults were collected as wild smolt in 2017 and 2018 and raised at the Dalhousie University Agriculture Campus in Truro.
- Approximately 80 classrooms were provided with trout or salmon eggs for aquarium units in the educational Fish Friends program.
- The Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative funded five projects in 2019, including studies on aquatic invasive species, the genetics of brook trout and the efficacy of habitat restoration techniques.

In 2019, the Department continued to support the liming and habitat restoration project for salmon and trout on the West River Sheet Harbour. In 2019, 79.1 tonnes of lime were spread over 80 hectares in the Tent Brook catchment. This “Proof of Concept” is now the nucleus of major restoration planning for eight priority rivers in Nova Scotia with committed funding from federal and provincial sources totaling \$5.7 million through to 2023.

Routine surveillance for aquatic invasive species discovered that smallmouth bass had been illegally introduced into Piper Lake, a headwater lake of the St. Mary’s River. In 2019-20, a comprehensive plan was developed to contain, control and eventually eradicate this invasive fish species and preserve the natural ecosystem of this important trout and salmon river.

By optimizing angling opportunities while ensuring fish and habitat conservation, the Department continued to assess the effectiveness of sportfishing regulations so that future generations can benefit from a sustainable and vibrant sportfishing industry. The Department held six regional public engagement sessions to ensure a consultative and collaborative approach and that fisheries management decisions are science-based and balanced with societal values.

Supporting Growth of the Aquaculture Industry

The Aquaculture Division has been working with operators to improve the production from existing sites and has also continued its work on advanced planning to facilitate the responsible growth of the industry. Both existing license holders and new entrants have applied for new aquaculture sites and the Department has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality of Argyle to work together to establish an Aquaculture Development Area. The Division continues to manage environmental monitoring, aquatic animal health, containment management and operational performance on sites using the Farm Management Plan system.

Through Perennia, the Centre for Marine Applied Research (CMAR) has continued its work on strategic project development and leveraging partnerships to support the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry in Nova Scotia while fostering collaboration with the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship ocean technology cluster industries. CMAR’s

focused data collection and modeling initiatives are providing industry, stakeholders and government with valuable information to make informed development decisions.

Promoting Safety in the Fisheries

Promoting safety at sea, on the wharf and in processing facilities continued to be a priority for 2019-20. The Department partnered with industry, the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB) to implement the industry-led, five-year *Fishing Safety Now* action plan (2015-2020) to improve workplace safety in the fishing sector.

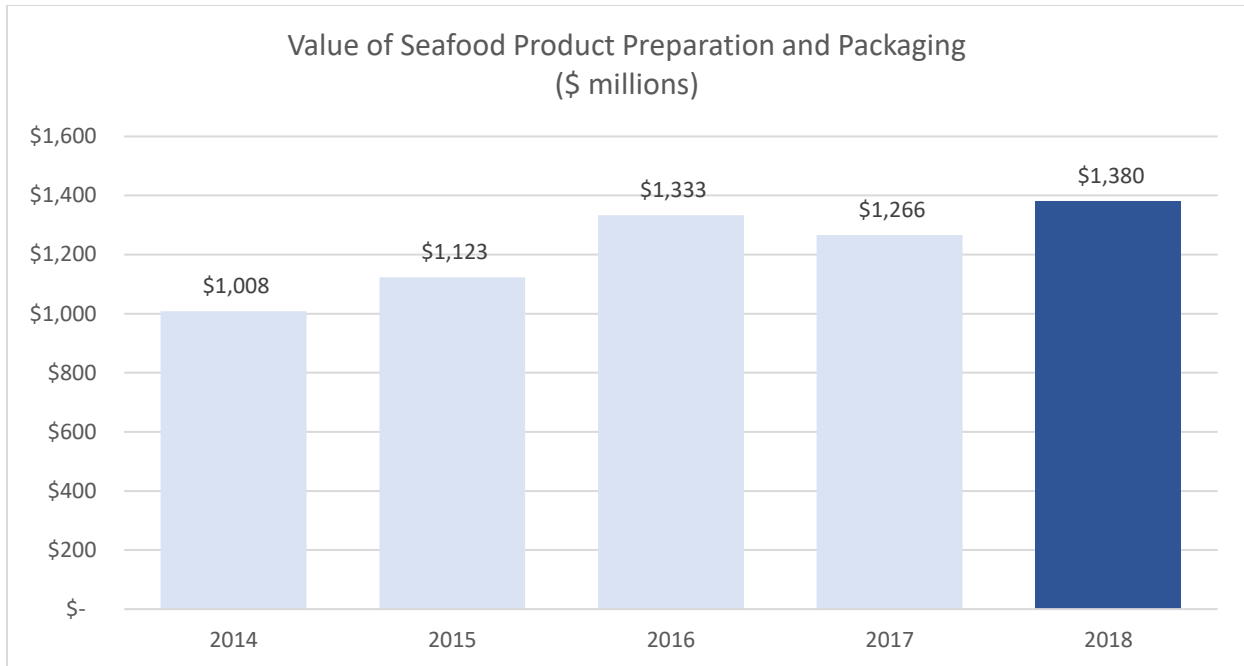
WCB registered 706 accident claims reflecting the fish products industry (processing), saltwater fishing industry (commercial fisheries), inland fishing industry (recreational fishing), aquaculture, and services incidental to fishing. The number decreased from 713 in 2018.

Fisheries Landings

Fisheries landings from Fisheries and Oceans Canada statistics indicate that Nova Scotia's total live weight fisheries landings decreased from 260,380 metric tonnes in 2017 to 244,808 metric tonnes in 2018. Fisheries landings are an important measure to assess productivity and health of the marine environment and fish stocks, particularly in the context of global warming and changing ecosystems. The value of the landings decreased from \$1.409 billion in 2017 to \$1.353 billion in 2018 which can be attributed to a decrease in shellfish landings. Data for 2019 are not yet available.

Seafood Processing

The Department is committed to supporting the Province's fish and seafood processing sector which creates employment opportunities and adds value to our fisheries resource. The value of seafood product preparation and packaging shows the combined output of all seafood processing operations in Nova Scotia. A 9 percent increase in seafood manufacturing values was recorded between 2017 and 2018. Data for 2019 are not yet available.



Assisting Industry to Adapt to Ecosystem and Climate Challenges

Through collaboration with other agencies, the Department is continually developing capacity to address internal and external needs related to coastal and ocean management issues and climate-driven environmental changes that impact the socio-economic interests of Nova Scotia's seafood sector.

Through the establishment of its Marine Debris Clean Up Program, the Department helped support industry contributions to keeping our shorelines and marine waters clean.

Working with the Nova Scotia Department of the Environment's Climate Change unit, the Department completed a Climate Change Scan to assess the Department's internal capacity to support and address climate-driven impacts to how the Department and its clients operate. The Department is exploring ways to support the fish and seafood sector in understanding, maintaining resiliency and adapting to the threats and opportunities that will arise from climate-driven environmental changes.

Administration of Licences and Leases

In 2019-20, there were:

- 240 active aquaculture sites representing \$230,000 in licensing and leasing revenues.
- 17 rockweed leases generating royalties of \$50,862 and \$11,279 in lease fees.
- 347 licensed fish buyers and 224 licensed fish processing facilities. Licensing revenue from fish buyers and processors was \$224,300 and \$62,200 respectively.
- 1,454 licenses issued to designated buyers (agents of fish buyers) totaling \$48,200 in license sales revenues.

Through an ongoing policy review of the buyer and processor licensing regime, the Department is seeking to implement a more transparent licensing framework. To support the policy review, the Department conducted industry consultations in 2019-20 to identify policy opportunities that

will result in a modern licensing policy that supports industry's efforts to build strong seafood businesses that will in turn support Nova Scotia coastal economies.

Marine Division

In 2019-2020, the Marine Division:

- Represented provincial fisheries interest at numerous federal and international fisheries management advisory committees where key decisions are made about the management and execution of the commercial fisheries at the local, regional, and international levels. Decisions coming out of these meetings impact how and to what degree the fisheries are executed and ultimately the economic benefits that Nova Scotia realizes from its commercial fishing and seafood processing industries which are the back-bone of rural coastal communities.
- Fisheries Fund through Coastal Resource Coordinators' ongoing promotion, information sharing and liaison with clients in the seafood sector.
- The Coastal Resource Coordinators worked with industry clients to identify strategic opportunities and/or overcome barriers to industry growth; these included access to resources, identification of underutilized/developing species, attracting and maintaining skilled labour and industry financing through the Nova Scotia Fisheries Loan Board.
- In partnership with other government departments, agencies and the fishing industry, staff participated in and promoted the *Fishing Safety Now* initiative via information sessions, committees and various training initiatives.
- Staff provided ongoing regional and extension services to a variety of agencies and partners relating to aquaculture development, sportfishing, boatbuilding and Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board activities.
- Coastal Resource Coordinators played a key industry liaison role to both gather critical regional industry intelligence related to COVID-19 impacts and to inform and educate industry on public health measures and requirements.
- Administers the Fish Harvesters Organizations Support Act that strengthens the collective voice and capacity of fish harvesters in areas where they have voted in the Act by enabling the collection of mandatory dues for fish harvester organizations that allows them to carry-out their work and advocacy on behalf of their membership.
- Oversight of the Fish Harvester Registration and Certification Board Act which is enabling legislation to support the formation of a board to register and certify fish harvesters based on established certification criteria with an end goal of promoting the sustainability and economic viability of the fishing industry.

Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board

The Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board invested over \$61 million into growing the rural and coastal economy throughout the province through flexible, long-term lending programs. As of March 31, 2020, the Board has a total investment of \$ 195.9 million and is proud to support all parts of the fishery and aquaculture industry. Supported by updated regulations, the Board was able to improve service times for loans between \$1 to \$5 million, reduce service fees and expand its lending programs to more areas of industry, including the processing sector. The Board was pleased to support innovative projects in the province this year with a focus on clean energy, efficiency and sustainability.

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Accountability Report 2019-2020

The Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board supported industry through the onset of COVID-19 by providing flexibility to individual clients who were financially impacted by the pandemic. In March 2020, the Board supported clients through payment deferral options such as interest-only payments and full principal and interest deferrals.

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest and Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purpose of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse of gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counseling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2019-2020
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A