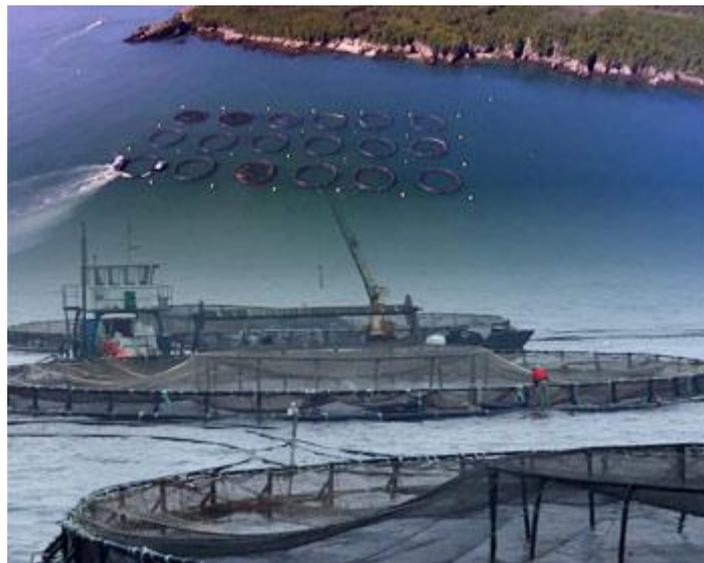


Federal govt gives Cooke Aquaculture approval for expansion



Cooke Aquaculture salmon farming facilities. (Photo: Cooke Aquaculture/FIS)

Transport Canada has given approval for Cooke Aquaculture to open two new fish farms in Jordan Bay in Shelburne County. Opponents are worried the ecosystem will suffer.

Transport Canada said that after considering that appropriate measures are available to protect wildlife and marine habitat, “the project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects.”

Cooke’s venture includes two separate fin fish sites at the opening to Jordan Bay. They will take up 40 ha, according to Transport Canada documents. The sites will each have 30 cages and be situated 2.1 km apart.

Twenty-four of the 30 cages at each farm will be stocked during the first growing cycle and they may all be used in the second, Transport Canada communicated, *Chronicle Herald* reports.

The plan is to stock each site with 550,000-700,000 fish.

Sindy Horncastle from the citizens’ group Mayday Shelburne County highlighted that the project will be situated in a sensitive ecosystem. She argues that even if safeguards do exist, there is no enforcement in place, *CBC News* reports.

Horncastle said the members of her group are extremely disappointed by the project’s approval.

“Because there’s so much science that shows it’s not a good idea. We’re probably going to try to have a community meeting. We’re just really disappointed,” she added.

Nova Scotia’s government must still approve the project, which also needs provincial approval from Sterling Belliveau, the minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Aquaculture leases or licenses are issued in Nova Scotia under the Aquaculture License and Lease Regulations of the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

Pam Davidson, a spokesperson with the provincial fisheries department, said it could take a few weeks to receive advice from Transport Canada on their review.

“Once we receive Transport Canada advice, we will prepare our recommendations to the minister based on information received to date,” she said.

In June, Nova Scotia’s government said it would lend Cooke CAD 25 million (USD 24 million) to expand its operations in Shelburne, Digby and Truro, CAD 9 million (USD 8.8 million) of which will be forgiven through the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund. Of the CAD 16 million interest-bearing loan, CAD 4 million (USD 3.9 million) can be forgiven based on research, development and commercialization of innovation in the aquaculture industry.

The plan is to generate more than 400 jobs and strengthen the economy in rural areas.

This spring, Cooke killed hundreds of thousands of salmon because of an outbreak of infectious salmon anemia (ISA) in its pens outside Shelburne Harbour.

By Natalia Real