

## Province Undermines Own Aquaculture Regulations with Shelburne Site “Renewal”

August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016



KJIPIKTUK (HALIFAX) - The Ecology Action Centre is calling on the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NSDFA) Minister Keith Colwell to process the current lease ‘renewal’ application by Cooke Aquaculture in Shelburne Harbour as what it actually is – a new site application. This would ensure the new provincial aquaculture regulations adopted in 2015 after a lengthy taxpayer funded panel, broad consultations, and the Doelle-Lahey Report, are implemented with a full assessment by an Independent Panel.

Cooke’s site 0602, now up for lease ‘renewal’, could easily be mistaken for the same ‘site 0602’ that was closed by Cooke in 2011 after sediment testing results exceeded acceptable standards multiple times over years. In reality, this “renewal” site is actually a physically a new site, located 40m away from the ‘old 0602’ with completely new boundaries, a larger area, new infrastructure and soon, new fish.

“Given the history of poor testing levels and community conflict over this particular site, it is difficult to see the Minister’s decision to treat this as a renewal as anything but an effort to avoid a full ecological and economic assessment”, says Susanna Fuller, Marine Conservation Coordinator of the Ecology Action Centre, “Our communities and our marine environment deserve much better and that is what we expected out of the new regulations.”

According to the consultation document, the new site 0602 is located in shallower water, closer to shore, with a similarly slow current and flushing rate. It is difficult to argue that the ‘new 0602’ will not also succumb to rapid waste accumulation problems that lead to the closure of the ‘old 0602’.

The renewal application does not provide an explanation for the applicant's move to a new location. Cooke Aquaculture has stated they use best aquaculture practices to ensure the "marine environment remains healthy and productive".

"If this is the case they should be able to farm at their original site indefinitely. If Cooke is arguing the 'old site' is not suitable for salmon production, it seems they should not have been granted a license in the first place. On top of that, no evidence has been presented publicly to show moving to a new site a mere 40m away will produce better results," says Shannon Arnold, Marine Policy Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre. "This seems no different to slash and burn agriculture. If the government continues allowing them to move on from over-polluted sites, of course, they can continue making profit by squeezing a few years of nutrient loading out of the ocean bottom, one 20 hectare rectangle at a time."

To date no salmon ocean aquaculture site has undergone the new independent panel assessment, put in place partly as an effort to increase social acceptability of the industry. The Ecology Action Centre urges the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture to put their new regulatory process to test, make public a full assessment of this new site in both the ecological fit and economic contribution or the new regulations will look like little more than window dressing on a process that never actually changed.

**For further information, please contact**

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**Background Information**

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture does not make public submissions available. The Ecology Action Centre's submission to the renewal process can be **downloaded here** as well as research conducted over 4 years at the Shelburne site by independent scientist Inka Milewski **here**.