

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

B.C. SALMON AQUACULTURE POLICY

The B.C. government placed a cap of 121 on marine salmon farms tenures in 1995, pending the results of a review by the Environmental Assessment Office. The review, completed in 1997, made 49 recommendations to reduce risks of salmon aquaculture.

In 1999, government accepted the Environmental Assessment Office recommendations but decided not to lift the cap on the number of farms until a new regulatory framework was developed to address the issues. Work on that framework has been underway ever since.

The Environmental Assessment Office's 1997 salmon aquaculture review identified these concerns:

- Environmental standards and mechanisms to enforce them were inadequate.
- Some operations were poorly sited and conflicted with local environments, communities and other resource uses.
- There were no incentives to develop and adopt new environmental technologies.

Since 1999, the salmon aquaculture policy framework has addressed the major environmental concerns noted in the salmon aquaculture review recommendations. The following changes are complete or scheduled to be completed by spring of 2002. Detailed information is available on the Web sites of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (www.agf.gov.bc.ca/fisheries/aquaculture_main.htm) and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (www.gov.bc.ca/wlap), the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (www.gov.bc.ca/srm), and the British Columbia Assets and Land Corp. (www.bcal.bc.ca).

Under the framework, government has evaluated the future direction of salmon farming based on environmental standards, technological development and consultation with communities. In particular, government addressed fish health, waste management, escape management, compliance and enforcement, research and development, and siting and relocation.

ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

Escapes

- In October 2000, new regulations were introduced that established tough standards for preventing escapes. These changes have made British Columbia a world leader in the field of escape prevention management.
- Compliance monitoring and escape reporting have been improved.
- A review of regulations to streamline and refine effectiveness is being conducted. A package of potential regulation changes was provided to the salmon aquaculture implementation committee in December 2001. Following consultations, final changes will be made and brought to cabinet in March 2002.

Waste

- Industry-funded monitoring programs have been completed at all 91 existing sites.
- Detailed sediment monitoring of six farm sites is complete. A report was issued last fall. Ongoing monitoring is being conducted.
- An Aquaculture Waste Control Regulation under the Waste Management Act is being drafted by the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. The regulation will authorize discharges from finfish aquaculture operations provided they comply with new waste discharge standards. This regulation will be reviewed in five years.
- The provincial government is working towards compatibility between the province’s standards and the federal Fisheries Act.

Fish Health

- Guidelines for fish health management have been developed, including standards for disease prevention, outbreak management, drug use and disease reporting.
- All farms are required to submit fish health management plans.
- A fish health database has been developed and is in a pilot testing stage.
- A fish-disease surveillance and auditing program has been put in place by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

Siting and Relocation

- Seven of 11 poorly sited farms, identified for relocation in 1999, have been moved. The remaining four are in process, and their moves are expected to be finished soon.
- A further 25 farms were identified for relocation or amended operational practices in 2001.

LOCATION/TENURE	COMPANY
McCaw Peninsula	Creative Salmon Company
Simoom Sound	Heritage Aquaculture
Cypress Harbour	Heritage Aquaculture
Conville Point	Kitasoo Aquafarms/Marine Harvest Canada
Bear Bay	Marine Harvest Canada
South Shelter	Marine Harvest Canada
South Shelter	Marine Harvest Canada
Amai Inlet	Marine Harvest Canada
Loughborough (2 sites within tenure)	Omega Salmon Group
SE Frederick Arm (3 sites within tenure)	Omega Salmon Group
Sansum Narrows	Omega Salmon Group
Goletas Channel	Omega Salmon Group
Goodridge Island	EWOS/Pacific National Aquaculture
Belcher Point	EWOS/Pacific National Aquaculture
Obstruction Island	EWOS/Pacific National Aquaculture
Potts Bay	Stolt Seafarms
Mound Island	Stolt Seafarms
Mistake Island	Stolt Seafarms
Broughton Island	Stolt Seafarms
Monday Rocks	Stolt Seafarms
Smith Rocks	Stolt Seafarms
Keogh Lake	Stolt Seafarms
Hardy Island	Target Marine Products
Hardy Island	Target Marine Products
Doctor Bay	Saltstream Engineering

- Over the next several months, the B.C. government will screen sites in specific geographic areas to determine areas suitable and capable for salmon aquaculture and begin processing applications for farm relocations to new tenure sites in these screened areas.
- Through these aquaculture opportunity studies, government will produce regional maps that identify areas where salmon farm tenure applications have a reasonable chance of success, as well as areas where habitat considerations, social conflicts or other issues may be barriers.
- The tenure and licensing application processes and referral processes are being streamlined.

Pilot Projects Research and Development

- Six pilot projects have been approved, and four have begun operations.
- The remaining four pilot projects were scheduled for freshwater sites. Their status is being determined through a freshwater salmon farming strategy, which is being developed to improve the industry's international competitiveness.
- Legislation for a research and development levy was passed.
- Federal aquaculture research funding has been established.
- Industry members, previously unwilling to support research funding due to the current economic situation, must now conduct research to provide science-based information for industry management.

Federal government interests

- A joint management plan – a single-window and coordinated approach with the federal government – is being developed.
- B.C. is working with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to create a compatible approach on development of standards, reporting and approvals.
- The governments will co-operate on enforcement and compliance activities to be effective and efficient.

Compliance and Enforcement

- Both the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection have compliance and enforcement responsibilities associated with the finfish aquaculture industry. The ministries are developing a coordinated approach.
- By April 30, 2002, there will be clear standards in place for escapes and waste management. Monitoring will be conducted regularly by compliance and enforcement staff from the appropriate ministry. Farms will be required to provide performance information.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries has enhanced annual regular inspections of all active finfish aquaculture farms to assess compliance with legislative and regulatory provisions.
- The government is considering increased penalties for escapes.
- Other changes and additions over the past 18 months include the spot audit dive program; licensing and enforcement case file tracking system; 24-hour toll-free escape reporting line (1-877-223-4673); annual reporting on salmon farm inspections; and an expanded vessel fleet that improves all-weather access to marine sites and enhances remote operating vehicle capability.
- Compliance and enforcement staff investigate every suspected or known escape incident and, depending on the results of the investigation, forward recommended charges to Crown counsel.

Development of non-salmon species

- Significant interest exists within the aquaculture industry to diversify into non-salmonid species such as sablefish.
- Although the 1995 moratorium applied to salmon farms only, lack of clear provincial policy is currently hindering the ability of the sector to diversify. New market opportunities are being missed.
- Starting April 30, 2002, the province will begin accepting applications for non-salmon finfish aquaculture sites.

Development of this component of the industry will take place under the same tough standards for wastes, fish health, escapes and siting that are being applied to the salmon sector. New entrants will also be subject to a strict compliance and enforcement regime.

NEW APPLICATIONS

- The government will begin processing new applications for salmon farm tenures and licences on April 30, 2002.
- The industry must be prepared to meet new waste management standards that will be in place by the spring.
- New locations will let companies take the pressure off current sites, which are operating to full capacity, and move poorly located farms.
- This will help address environmental concerns while keeping production high enough to be financially worthwhile and bring economic benefits to coastal communities.
- Since aquaculture has a two-year production cycle, industry needs to apply for new sites starting April 30, 2002, to start new activities in 2003.

Economic benefits:

- Managed expansion would enable agreements between First Nations and the aquaculture industry to provide economic activity and jobs for native people.
- Development scenarios indicate that more than \$1 billion in new investment could result in the next few years, including new areas in the Central and North Coasts.
- Employment potential is estimated to be between 9,000 and 12,000 direct jobs in the next decade.
- Most of those jobs would be in coastal communities hit hard by economic downturn, including Prince Rupert.
- Expansion of the industry would result in more suppliers of specialized goods and services, many of which are based on Vancouver Island and could develop in areas such as Prince Rupert.

TIMELINE

1986 – The provincial government places a moratorium on the approval of new farms and undertakes the Gillespie public inquiry. The moratorium was lifted soon after the report from the inquiry was received.

1988 – The British Columbia ombudsman's office prepares a special report on the administration of coastal resources.

1995 – The minister of environment, lands and parks and the minister of agriculture, fisheries and food ask the Environmental Assessment Office to review the adequacy of methods and processes used by the two ministries in regulating and managing salmon aquaculture operations.

1997 – An Environmental Assessment Office scientific review is the most rigorous and costly in the history of the province. The review makes 49 recommendations that would further reduce risks of salmon aquaculture, all of which were accepted in full by government and industry.

1999 – Government announces changes to be made under the salmon aquaculture policy framework.

2000 – Revised aquaculture regulation standardizes and improves escape prevention practices across the salmon aquaculture industry.

2002 – B.C. government announces that the implementation of new and comprehensive environmental standards will allow for a managed expansion of the salmon aquaculture industry in British Columbia beginning April 30, 2002.

STUDIES AND REPORTS

Salmon Aquaculture Review Report from the Environmental Assessment Office, concluding that that “farming in British Columbia, as presently practised and at current production levels, presents a low overall risk to the environment.” The report included 49 recommendations, which the government accepted and has been working to implement.

www.eao.gov.bc.ca/project/AQUACULT/SALMON/Report/final/vol1/toc.htm

Net-pen Salmon Farming Industry in the Pacific Northwest U.S. Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration study assesses risks and approaches of salmon aquaculture including in B.C.

www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/pubs/tm/tm49/TM49.htm

Interim Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries “Aquaculture in Canada’s Atlantic and Pacific Regions” addresses federal issues regarding salmon aquaculture.

www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-E/fish-e/rep-e/repintjun01-e.htm

Fisheries and Oceans Canada scientific study of the occurrence of sea lice [Studies of early marine survival of Pacific Salmon and sea lice occurrence in Queen Charlotte Strait in 2001](#)

Auditor General of Canada 2000 report on Fisheries and Oceans Canada “The Effects of Salmon Farming in British Columbia on the Management of Wild Salmon Stocks.” The report includes a response from the federal department.

www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/0030ce.html

Net-strength study – Developed a standard testing procedure to determine net strength and reviewed and recommends some changes to the minimum breaking-strength values in the current Aquaculture Regulation.

www.agf.gov.bc.ca/fisheries/regulation/regulation.htm

SALMON AQUACULTURE REVIEW'S 49 RECOMMENDATIONS

As of January 2002, the following progress can be reported:

- Twenty-three of the recommendations have been accepted and adopted as specified by the Environmental Assessment Office.
- Another 16 have been partially implemented, with sub-recommendations either in the process of implementation or, in some cases, modified to better suit the goals and jurisdiction of the provincial government.
- Eight recommendations have not been adopted for a variety of reasons (for example, because implementation is subject to a specific condition that has not been met or because conditions have changed since the Environmental Assessment Office concluded its work).
- The two remaining recommendations are not applicable to current programs or are matters of federal jurisdiction with only marginal participation from Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries or the province.
- The full report card on actions to date on the recommendations is available at www.agf.gov.bc.ca/fisheries/salmonreview_jan02.pdf

COMPARISON OF AQUACULTURE REGULATIONS BY JURISDICTION

<i>Area of concern</i>	<i>Jurisdictions With Regulations in Place</i>							
	<i>B.C.</i>	<i>Chile</i>	<i>Maine</i>	<i>N.B.</i>	<i>Nfld.</i>	<i>Norway</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Wash.</i>
<i>Siting</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
<i>Licence</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Transport</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Wastes</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
<i>Marine Mammals</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Escapes</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
<i>Fish Health</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Local Government or Area Planning</i>	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓

ADVISORY, REVIEW AND CONSULTATION PROCESSES

Salmon Aquaculture Implementation Advisory Committee (SAIAC)

www.agf.gov.bc.ca/fisheries/saiac.htm

The salmon aquaculture implementation advisory committee was established in 1999 to involve First Nations, coastal communities, environmental organizations, industry and the federal and provincial governments in the implementation of regulations, policy development, and the strategic development of the salmon farming industry.

Jeremy Maynard, chair, Sport Fish Advisory Board

Sergio Paone, Friends of Clayoquot Sound

Laurie MacBride, executive director, Georgia Strait Alliance

Guy Beaupré, regional director, habitat and enhancement, Department of Fisheries and Oceans

Jim Abram, Union of B.C. Municipalities, director, Regional District of Comox-Strathcona

Johann van Rensburg, CEO, Future SEA Technologies Inc.

David Lane, T. Buck Suzuki Foundation and United Fisheries and Allied Workers Union

Chief James Walkus, Gwa'Sala Nakwaxda'xw First Nation

Chief Richard Harry, Homalco First Nation

Mary Ashley, District of Campbell River

Odd Grydeland, B.C. Salmon Farmers Association

Dale Blackburn, manager, Stolt Sea Farm Inc.

Kim Pullen, president, Pacific National Group

Rod Sam, Ahousat Nation, B.C. Aboriginal Fisheries Commission

Ron Kilmury, Marine Harvest Canada

Rob Morley, Canadian Fishing Co.

Aquaculture Opportunities Studies

The aquaculture opportunity study is being led by technical staff from the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, the B.C. Assets and Land Corp., the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection with input from the federal department of Fisheries and Oceans.

There will be discussions with First Nations councils and local government councils to confirm their willingness to consider applications for relocating farms within the areas identified on the aquaculture opportunity study maps. The maps will be labelled to reflect areas where First Nations and local government support is confirmed.

Regional priorities and target dates for completion of aquaculture opportunity study maps are:

Nootka Sound	Feb. 15, 2002
Quatsino Sound	Feb. 15, 2002
Kyuquot Sound	February 2002
North Coast	Feb. 28, 2002 (for selected areas)
Broughton to Cape Caution	Feb. 28, 2002

-30-

NOTE: This news release and a media backgrounder are available at www.gov.bc.ca/agf online. Additional detailed media backgrounders are also available on draft waste management regulations (www.gov.bc.ca/wlap) and on resiting (www.bcal.bc.ca) and aquaculture opportunity studies (www.gov.bc.ca/srm) or by calling the contacts below.

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