

Marine Issues Committee Position Statement on Salmon Aquaculture in Nova Scotia

The EAC advocates for a more sustainable salmon aquaculture industry in Nova Scotia. We promote the transition to more responsible and innovative closed containment technology as a solution to many of the key negative environmental impacts of open net cages. We acknowledge that energy use must be evaluated and addressed, however the challenges of energy-efficiency and carbon footprint are solvable compared to the fundamentally flawed technology of open net salmon pens. We support shellfish operations that are appropriate in scale. In Nova Scotia, we would like to see the aquaculture industry be guided by a plan for rural economic development in a way that does not degrade habitats or appropriate coastal land from traditional fisheries, tourism or landowners and that implements the best practices of community engagement and benefit.

What is the issue?

Open net pen finfish (primarily salmon and trout) aquaculture has been a relatively small part of Nova Scotia's coastal industries for the last 30 years. However, in the past three years there has been significant industrial-scale expansion particularly in Southwest Nova Scotia in St. Mary's Bay, Jordan Bay and restocking in Shelburne Harbour, with additional applications for three sites on the Eastern Shore. All have been met with opposition from communities, conservation organizations, commercial fisheries and concerned citizens.

Open net pen salmon farming is a destructive fish farming practice that has had and continues to have widespread negative environmental and social impacts in every jurisdiction in the world where it exists, and is thus met with controversy wherever it is proposed. Nova Scotia is regionally unique in that it has a rural economy highly dependent on a pollution free marine environment where the commercial lobster fishery, recreational wild salmon fishery, and the tourism industry support thousands of families in coastal communities. Nova Scotia bays and harbours are particularly unsuitable (shallow depths, slow currents, cold temperatures, and vulnerable native species) for this type of finfish aquaculture.

The EAC is opposed to open net pen finfish aquaculture primarily because of its negative environmental impacts, both on the immediate marine environment and on the stocks of wild fish used for feed. There is a large body of research demonstrating that open net pen salmon farms are negatively effecting wild fish and marine ecosystems even with the existing regulatory requirements.

Site-specific environmental impacts of open net pen aquaculture include:

- Pollution of the marine environment through feces, excess feed, anti-foulants, toxic pesticides and farm debris

- Disease outbreaks and parasites that may be transferred to wild fish
- Escapes that threaten already vulnerable populations of wild Atlantic Salmon

More generally, we are concerned with

- Use of wild fish for feed impacts wild stocks around the world as demand for fishmeal grows.
- Privatization of coastal areas, with little to no public benefit
- Displacement and impacts on traditional fisheries

The current regulatory system in Nova Scotia does not adequately monitor environmental impacts and when thresholds, such as sediment sulphide levels are reached, there is little to no enforcement that ensures the salmon farm will discontinue operations.

What do we intend to achieve?

Outcome:

All open net pen finfish sites are removed from Nova Scotia waters marine waters and all finfish aquaculture operations are required to use biologically secure closed containment systems.

Goals:

- No new open net pen finfish licenses approved
- No restocking of inactive open net pen finfish licenses
- Removal of all existing open net pen fin fish operations

How do we plan to achieve this?

- We work for the protection of coastal ecosystems and coastal communities.
- We participate in coastal planning process that will result in appropriate aquaculture species and technology operations sited appropriately to minimize environmental impacts, and reduce community conflicts.
- We want to see a significant improvement in regulatory compliance, adherence to stronger regulations and regulatory processes, the assurance that all monitoring results are publicly accessible in a timely manner, and enforcement and lease revocation of non-compliant sites.
- We support the implementation of the recommendations of the Cohen Commission ([link](#)), in particular the need to separate out the competing and conflicting priorities of regulation and promotion both housed federally in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and provincially in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

- We support the recommendations of the Royal Society of Canada panel report on impacts to marine biodiversity ([link](#)), and recommend that Nova Scotia use science as a basis for decision making in all issues related to aquaculture siting and regulation.

What type of aquaculture do we support?

As part of the Atlantic Coalition for Aquaculture Reform (ACAR- NS), we partner with other organizations in Atlantic Canada. We support an aquaculture industry that achieves the following:

- Does not degrade the ecosystems in which it is located or upon which it is dependent.
- Does not harm wild fish populations or traditional coastal industries
- Is in harmony with the economic, social and cultural activities that use the same resources access to information and participation in decision-making is fair and equitable.
- Ensures that costs are not externalized to the environment, other sectors or individuals and are reflected in the cost of production.
- Does not diminish the ability of future generations to use the same natural resources.

We specifically encourage the fish farming industry nationally, in collaboration with members of ACAR and the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) to:

- Use closed containment technology that eliminates the risks of disease and parasite transfer to wild fish as well as escapes of farmed fish into the wild;
- Guarantee untreated waste is not released into the ocean;
- Label fish indicating farmed and method of farming so consumers can make informed choices;
- Develop feed for farmed salmon that does not deplete fish stocks around the world;
- Ensure wildlife is not harmed as a result of fish farming;
- Prohibit the use of genetically modified fish;
- Eliminate the use of chemicals, antibiotics and pesticides in fish farming;
- Ensure contaminants in farmed fish don't exceed levels deemed safe by international standards; and
- Stop locating fish farms in areas opposed by local communities.