

UPDATE TO AVICC EXECUTIVE ON SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 14th, 2021

From: Daniel Arbour, AVICC - DFO/SAMAC representative

RE: Updates on DFO Shellfish Aquaculture Management Advisory Committee

Dear AVICC Executive and Staff,

It has been nearly a year since my last update as your AVICC appointee to the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Shellfish Aquaculture Management Advisory Committee (SAMAC). COVID created some challenges around the fall 2020 meeting, as I struggled with a poorly timed power outage during the meeting and other technical difficulties were experienced.

However, as of this spring's meeting there are some momentous announcements I can report on, which are in part the fruit of the last two years of committee work, as well as leadership by industry, the federal and provincial government, First Nations, environmental groups, and local government. I hope you will enjoy reading this report, which provides highlights of the April 14th 2021 SAMAC meeting, and I am remain available for further questions and feedback.

DFO Introduces new Conditions of Shellfish License

At our meeting DFO unveiled its new 2021 Conditions of Shellfish Aquaculture License, which have been worked on for the last two years. This major update attempts to resolve long-standing issues, such as issues around plastic equipment debris, traceability, and ocean floor preservation. These have been priority discussion focuses for our table at SAMAC, and we were able to build goodwill and collaboration across our advisory group. Highlights of the new DFO Conditions of License include:

- 1) *New requirement for every company to label every piece of equipment and gear from 2023 on.*
This was seen as a key item to support producer responsibility, and accountability to the public.
- 2) *New requirements around traceability procedures.* DFO reported a large amount of illegal harvest finding their way through processing plant over the years. The new traceability standard is expected to put a significant dent into the flow of illegal product.
- 3) *Fish Habitat and Sea Floor Protection.* New protocols will trigger regular ocean clean-ups at farms. Quite often, debris that floats or finds its way to shore represents only a fraction of lost gear, which settles on the ocean floor.

In my opinion, these three new elements of the Conditions of License are a breakthrough in addressing perennial issues in the sector, and should go a long way to enhance social license and reduce ecological impacts over time. As your representative I advocated for these measures, and am pleased to find they are now legal requirements. To be noted, the industry association and other partners have championed many of these changes as well and showed enormous leadership, with a recognition that these measures will help level the playing field in the sector and posit industry participants for long-term success.

Area-Based Management still under consideration

In 2019 and 2020, the Department of Fisheries conducted a BC wide engagement process to consider new models for both finfish and shellfish aquaculture. At the time, past Mayor of Tofino Josie Osborne and myself were your representative to this process. One interesting topic that was explored was to consider piloting a new management regime in Coastal BC, built around the concept of Area-Based Management. This approach would potentially introduce area-specific co-management, grounded in ecosystem approaches, and which could introduce multi-stakeholder advisory structures (including local government). At the April 14th meeting, DFO confirmed that they are still pursuing this, and looking to secure budgets to this effect.

Local government can support the shellfish sector through land use and infrastructure management.

As the shellfish sector improves their practices, they also highlight the need for local government to contribute to ocean water quality, which is necessary for the long-term viability of the sector. Problematics around septic outflows, farm uses, and watershed management (especially to prevent high turbidity and organic debris events) remain, and local government can be a consequential partner to improve water quality outcomes. A positive example was raised that in Ladysmith, the town's water treatment plant upgrades and adjustments were made to reduce risk on the marine environment and shellfish operations. New investments in sewage treatment, conveyance, and regulations by local government will help preserve the overall health of marine ecosystems, and provide material support to the shellfish sector.