



**Fisheries and Aquaculture
Office of the Minister**

PO Box 2223, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 3C4 • Telephone 902-424-8953 Fax 902-428-3145 • novascotia.ca

March 7, 2025

Warden Nicole Albright
Municipality of the District of Argyle
Rue J.E. Hatfield Court
Tusket, NS B0W 3M0

Via email: nalbright@munargyle.com

Dear Warden Albright:

I would like to begin by extending a belated congratulations to you and your Council members on being returned, or newly elected, to Council. Our department has had an excellent working relationship with the Municipality of the District of Argyle (MoDA), and I am looking forward to continuing that tradition as we move forward.

Significant progress has been made on the Argyle Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) Pilot Project since I last corresponded with Council, and I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on the project and to outline our next steps.

Following the April 15, 2024, Call for Proposals, for the first six ADA locations, the department received 14 proposals from nine different proponents. The 14 proposals were reviewed by staff and the ADA Proposal Assessment Panel to provide recommendations to the Aquaculture Administrator. On January 22, 2025, the Aquaculture Administrator selected five of the proposals, with each applicable to a single one of five ADA locations. All proponents who responded to the Call for Proposals have been notified of the Administrator's decision, and department staff have met with the successful proponents to provide directions on how to complete their applications for a Lease and License. **Applications must be received by April 22, 2025, to be considered.** Only one of the locations (#8010 located in Indian Sluice Bay) had no successful proponents.

Once the lease and license applications are received, department staff will review the applications, and they will be posted for a 30-day public comment period. Information from the department's review and the public comments received will be submitted to the Aquaculture Administrator for consideration as he makes his decision on the applications. All decisions concerning marine aquaculture sites must consider the eight factors described in *Section 3 of the Aquaculture License and Lease Regulations*. If you would like more information on the licensing process, please visit our website at <https://novascotia.ca/fish/aquaculture/licensing-leasing/>.

As I previously committed to your Council, we will not be announcing any additional Calls for Proposals for the remaining ADA locations, until we have had an opportunity to meet with Council to identify opportunities for further communication and engagement with the community. I believe that the earlier

public engagement on this project, led by MoDA and supported by our department, was comprehensive, thorough, and well documented, but we are open to discuss additional work that could be done. This does not mean, however, that we will be redoing the comprehensive public engagement process that took place prior to the creation of the ADA.

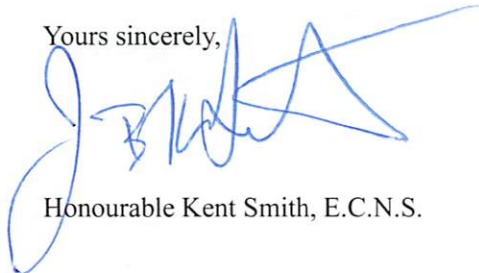
The process of creating the ADA, which came into law through an Order in Council on April 12, 2024, and the subsequent steps we have taken to offer sites through the competitive Call for Proposals and the administrative applications for a lease and license follow the Nova Scotia *Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act* and the *Aquaculture License and Lease Regulations*. The work that MoDA has done to support the ADA development is consistent with the 2020 MOU signed between our department and MoDA. I am satisfied that the legislated process was fairly and properly followed. Furthermore, if a licence application is submitted for a site within an ADA as part of a future Call for Proposals, there would be a 30-day public comment period for individuals to provide feedback.

It is important to note, that the *Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act* was amended in September 2024 to streamline the decision-making process for new shellfish and marine plant license applications, which was a key recommendation from the 2023 Regulatory Review (<https://novascotia.ca/fish/aquaculture/laws-regs/docs/regulatory-review-final-report.pdf>). That amendment, as well as others related to aquaculture, will come into force upon proclamation. In the meantime, the department is working on regulatory amendments to support the changes made to the *Act*. Once the *Act* amendments come into force, applications for new shellfish and marine plant licenses, outside of an ADA, will no longer be sent to the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review Board for a hearing and decision, but instead will require a 30-day public comment period, with the decision being made by the Aquaculture Administrator. In other words, applications for sites that are part of the Argyle ADA, will be given the exact same opportunity for public comment, and will be subject to determination by the same decision-maker, as new applications outside of the ADA.

As you know, Canada is facing challenging times, and our government is committed to making sure Nova Scotia is well positioned to meet these emerging threats. As a province, we must act quickly to become more self-reliant and unlock the potential of our rural economy through the responsible development of Nova Scotia's resources. Aquaculture is an excellent example of an industry that has a proven track record, excellent potential for growth, but is all too often held back because of misinformation and a fear of change. In 2020, MoDA showed vision and leadership by committing to a process with this department to seek out and identify opportunities for future aquaculture activities in an effort to stimulate economic development in your community. That was a smart decision five years ago that is even more relevant and consequential today.

I look forward to our continued cooperation on this project and I am particularly excited to see the business opportunities that it will create in your community. Please let me know if there is any additional information that you require, and we look forward to reengaging with your Council after the licensing process for the first five ADA locations has been concluded.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Smith', is written over the typed name.

Honourable Kent Smith, E.C.N.S.