



# NEWSLETTER

## Aboriginal Aquaculture Association

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[www.aboriginalaquaculture.com](http://www.aboriginalaquaculture.com)

## The Intergrated Geoduck Management Framework DFO's "Guiding Policy" on Geoduck Aquaculture Expansion

### The Highly Anticipated IGMF is released

The highly anticipated Integrated Geoduck Management Framework (IGMF) has finally been released by DFO and geoduck aquaculture has been given the green light. The IGMF provides policy guidance for the integrated management of both aquaculture and wild geoduck harvesting in B.C.

Following the release of the IGMF the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association (AAA) met with the AAA Geoduck Committee and hosted a First Nation meeting in April 2017 to review and get feedback on the Framework.

There was strong opposition expressed by some First Nations due to the ongoing concern that Aboriginal Rights and Title issues have not yet been adequately addressed in the framework, particularly in the development of the Siting Matrix which was advanced without any meaningful First Nation consultation. Through Treaty and constitutionally protected rights First Nations have a greater role in the management of aquatic resources and the development and implementation of policies and regulations that directly impact us.

Also missing from the Framework was strategic access to Wild/Feral stocks by the First Nation aquaculturists. First Nations have long held that the proceeds from the purge fishery should be invested into the new aquaculture operation providing the First Nation with much needed capital. Instead 20% of the estimated biomass will be available to commercial geoduck harvesters "displaced" by the shellfish aquaculture tenure in red and yellow zones. No purge is required in areas outside of these zones. First Nations continue to be frustrated as the IGMF protects the perceived rights of the Underwater Harvesters Association to the wild geoduck fishery. First Nation view is that compensation is not warranted to UHA as they are not being displaced, as the resource does not belong to them, they have only been granted limited access to harvest.

The Protocol states that any wild geoduck fishery license holder (UHA or PICFI license) may conduct a purge harvest and the quantity will be in addition to the annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the geoduck fishery. This protocol may be modified as experience is gained in these harvests and geoduck aquaculture practices and other relevant policies are developed.

It is worth noting that the response document that the AAA compiled (April 2014) from information collected from First Nations over a number of years and submitted to DFO did have some positive and measurable impact. When one compares this final version of the IGMF with the 2014 DFO draft, positive changes include;

- The Role of First Nations has been included;
- The IGMF acknowledges obligations to First Nations as a principle only second to conservation;
- The Framework provides access through the treaty and other negotiated processes in support of Canada's broad policy objective to provide economic development opportunities to First Nations. This was absent from the initial draft and it was an area where First Nations were seeking changes;
- The red zone tenure size limitation was increased from 5 to 10 hectares exclusively for First Nations in red zones "adjacent" to Reserve lands and Treaty Settlement Lands; with an opportunity beyond 10 ha in certain circumstances.

While the term "adjacency" has yet to be defined DFO has indicated that the definition should be broad, with an aim to be more inclusive than exclusive; to be flexible in order to allow as many opportunities for First Nations as possible.

A notable restriction for geoduck tenures owned by First Nations in red zones is that they cannot be sold or transferred. This policy constraint is unique to the IGMF and is contrary to all other current guidelines for shellfish aquaculture tenures and licenses and could make securing funding or the fostering of partnerships difficult.

While Parks and Protected Areas aren't specifically mentioned in the Framework DFO has indicated that consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis for those First Nations wishing to apply for a tenure in these areas.

While the framework is seen as contentious or limiting by some First Nations, it nevertheless, in its current conception provides unique opportunities for First Nations wishing to pursue this type of aquaculture.

Several First Nations have already started identifying the potential for geoduck aquaculture in their traditional territories by undertaking geoduck aquaculture suitability surveys; an important first step in determining the feasibility of geoduck farming. In addition to a survey a carefully thought-out business plan is critical before jumping into this high cost and long-term investment commitment as a 10-hectare farm is a \$1.5 million-dollar investment.

The Framework provides policy guidance only as Minister LeBlanc retains discretionary powers for "reasons of conservation" or "for any other valid reasons to modify any provision of this document". The IGMF is a working document that may and likely will be modified over time to better reflect changing realities; much can change over the next 5 to 7 years.

Richard Harry President of the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association states "I encourage First Nations to inform yourselves on the potential for geoduck aquaculture in your territory and then decide if you wish to pursue it. The Framework presents many challenges and opportunities, and First Nations need to test it to lay the groundwork for further changes."

Geoduck aquaculture offers the promise of long term employment, sustainable revenues and, considering the high value and demand for wild and farmed geoduck, it is not surprising to see some First Nation taking the first steps in participating in this newer form of aquaculture.

The AAA will host an information meeting this fall to discuss the IGMF. If you have any questions about the Framework please feel free to contact the AAA.

## Atlantic Salmon Escape from Net Pen – Washington

In mid August Atlantic salmon escaped from a fish farm in Washington State owned by Cooke Aquaculture. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources reports that upwards of 165,000 Atlantic fish escaped from the Cypress Island site.

Since this incident there have been many stories published. While most of the stories were balanced there were those that contained misleading information as well as misinformation about the potential consequences of the non-indigenous salmon escaping into Pacific waters.

A review of the facts is important. What do we know? We know that;

- Atlantic salmon is an entirely different species from those found in the Pacific. The east coast variety is more closely related to Brown trout and there is no evidence that Atlantic salmon have spawned or cross bred with other salmon species.
- There have been multiple attempts to introduce Atlantic salmon into the waters in BC and the Pacific Northwest in hopes to establish the species (1900s, 1950, 1980, 1981). Those efforts were unsuccessful and as a result were discontinued. In fact, no viable populations of Atlantic salmon have been established outside the specie's natural range despite many attempts.
- The Atlantic salmon that escaped were being fed and are not accustomed to having to find their own food; studies of escaped farmed salmon in BC have found very little natural prey in the stomachs of these fish
- The Atlantic salmon were being cared for in captivity and were considered to be disease free.

Atlantic salmon have escaped from farms in Washington State and BC in the past and DFO's Atlantic Salmon Watch Program (ASWP) monitors the situation. It is hypothesized that farmed Atlantic salmon could escape and successfully reproduce in BC waters. If non-native species became established in local waters, they would be found in their multiple

life stages, particularly juveniles in our coastal streams. DFO undertook extensive fieldwork in 2011 & 2012 in 12 freshwater streams on Vancouver Island and found no Atlantic salmon in any life stage.

There continues to be a genuine concern that there are potential risks, particularly about the farmed salmon outcompeting native salmon for food and spawning grounds. As a result of this incident there have been renewed calls for an outright ban on fish farming. A review of the facts does not warrant such a drastic measure at this time. There are many benefits to First Nations of the sector both socially and economically that need to be weighed and considered including the contribution that salmon aquaculture is making to protect the wild stocks. Without fish from aquaculture there would be greater demands placed on our wild salmon.

DFO will conduct stream surveys in areas closest to the US border to monitor for Atlantic salmon. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources and the Lummi Nation will continue to monitor the situation. In BC fishers are being asked to report any catch to the ASWP. Call toll free 1-800-811-6010. The AAA will also include this topic on the agenda for the fall meeting.

For updates on the Cypress Site see:

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/atlanticsalmon>

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## Siting Matrix – Copied from the Integrated Geoduck Management Framework

|  | YELLOW  | RED  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Category</b>  | Shellfish aquaculture applications accepted   | Shellfish aquaculture applications generally not accepted<br><br>· See exception in 6.2.2              |
| <b>Criteria for determining category</b>                             | Some geoduck commercial landing history (1 – 3 times in the last 4 fishing opportunities) | Geoduck harvested in each of the last 4 fishing opportunities  |
| <b>Review considerations</b>   | Review will include a detailed assessment of the potential impacts to the geoduck fishery | For exception situations only, review will follow Yellow area approach<br><br>Otherwise does not apply |
| <b>Commercial harvest opportunity prior to aquaculture licensing</b> | One commercial harvest opportunity: 3 months in 6 months PSP free window                  | For exception situations only: will follow the Yellow area approach<br><br>Otherwise does not apply    |

The Siting Matrix includes Red, Yellow and other zones that determine the location and maximum size of a tenure as well as applicant eligibility for making a shellfish aquaculture application. The siting matrix maps can be found at:

[www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/management-gestion/2017/geoduck-panope/maps-cartes-eng.html](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/management-gestion/2017/geoduck-panope/maps-cartes-eng.html)