



Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E6

JAN 28 2020

Mr. Peter Luckham
Chair
Islands Trust Council
200-1627 Fort Street
Victoria BC V8R 1H8

Dear Mr. Luckham:

Thank you for your correspondence of December 9, 2019, regarding shellfish aquaculture in Baynes Sound.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) shares your concerns about debris in the marine environment and about the issue of plastic gear being lost by the shellfish industry and washing up on beaches.

For the past two years, DFO has conducted compliance monitoring and follow-up with several licence holders in Baynes Sound who have been found to have violations of conditions of licence. As a result of inspections carried out this summer by the Province of British Columbia Lands Tenure Branch, DFO's shellfish aquaculture biologist is currently working with provincial compliance partners to compel cleanup of the majority of beach tenures on the west side of Denman Island.

To address non-compliance, DFO's biologist contacts violators by letter, informing them of the requirement that they remove debris and take action to prevent further marine debris. The approach is collaborative in nature, with the biologist working with the licence holder to compel cleanup, rather than through prosecution.

In addition, DFO Conservation and Protection staff have been engaged with stakeholders, industry, First Nations, and NGOs as part of working groups, shared forums and annual beach cleanup events.

Earlier this year, the Government of Canada announced the development of a Sustainable Fisheries Solutions and Retrieval Support Contribution Program. This program will provide up to \$8.3 million to assist fish harvesters, environmental groups, Indigenous communities, the aquaculture industry, and coastal communities to find and retrieve harmful marine litter or ghost gear from the ocean, and dispose of it responsibly. The program will also support industry in acquiring new clean technologies to reduce gear loss.

A website for this funding program is anticipated to launch in early January 2020. It will include information on the program and how to apply. I have asked DFO staff in the Pacific Region to share the link with you once the website has launched.

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Please be aware that the requirement to clearly mark tenure boundaries falls under provincial jurisdiction, via the land tenure contract rules established by the Province of British Columbia and the shellfish grower. I have forwarded a copy of your letter to the Honourable Doug Donaldson, British Columbia's Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, for his consideration.

DFO appreciates your concern for the marine environment and your dedicated work towards cleanup efforts. I assure you that the Department will continue to work with First Nations, industry, the Province of British Columbia, and stakeholders to address the issue of lost, abandoned, and discarded aquaculture gear.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Bernadette Jordan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

c.c.: The Honourable Doug Donaldson, M.L.A.
British Columbia's Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development