

Denman Island Marine Stewardship Committee
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November 3, 2010

Dr. Don Tillapaugh, Director
Centre for Shellfish Research
Vancouver Island University
900 5th Street, Nanaimo, B.C.
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Dear Dr. Tillapaugh:

I am writing on behalf of the Denman Island Marine Stewardship Committee, an organization with a membership of over two hundred people. It was formed in 1998 in response to the concerns of Islanders about the long term future of the aquaculture industry and how it would affect the quality of the marine environment, the foreshore, the social upland environment, and the seascape that would be inherited by future generations. Those concerns still exist, and in fact have been magnified in the past few years.

We commend you for your participation in bringing the Centre for Shellfish Research to this area and are pleased the university will be doing research in a variety of subjects, in particular “ensuring that environmental protection and a vibrant industry go hand in hand”, and interdisciplinary research “to ensure social health and benefits to coastal communities”. We need to be assured that the promotion and support of the industry will not take a higher priority than protection of the environment or the potential for a negative impact on the social environment. In our experience the impact on the social environment has been largely negative.

In the past six years DIMSC has organized an annual beach cleanup. Large quantities of debris have been collected by residents with over 90% of the garbage originating with the shellfish industry. The garbage is mostly plastic. A current scientific study has shown that plastic that was thought to be quite stable, actually breaks down in the ocean environment and decomposes as it is exposed to rain and sun and other environmental conditions and may potentially release toxic chemicals into the water (report to the 238th National Meeting to the American Chemical Society). Would you be considering doing research on developing other materials for use in their baskets and trays etc. in place of the plastic currently in use? Because tons of plastic get washed up on our beaches, it is apparent the industry must find ways of better securing their equipment, in addition to using something

other than the plastic currently in use. We commend you and trust your re-designed rafts will solve the problem of the industry rafts that are now being washed up on the foreshore.

Another concern is the use of anti-predator netting. This practice creates problems for boaters and swimmers and is unsafe in many areas where it is used. According to Dr. Leah Bendell of Simon Fraser University, “it is unnecessary to put nets over shellfish farms because it does not provide extra advantage to the farms in terms of protection. Rather it has negative effects on the natural ecological environment, with the issue of sedimentation by the nets, decreasing biodiversity and affecting predator populations”.(A Spatial Approach to Shellfish Aquaculture Resource Management: Case Study of Baynes Sound, B.C. –Peter Wan, Leah Bendell-Young, 2007). We hope that the use of anti-predator netting will also be part of your studies and that its use will be discontinued.

The presence of Cadmium in B.C. waters is also of concern. Oysters grown in areas high in cadmium that exceeds consumer guidelines for international markets means the possible loss of these markets. The negative impact on health of people consuming shellfish high in cadmium should be considered. This must be of serious concern to the industry. We believe much more study needs to be done on the levels of cadmium in different ocean locations so that the industry is sited in areas of low incidence of cadmium. We trust this is also an area of interest of your research team.

I have mentioned some of the concerns of the Denman Island Marine Stewardship Committee regarding the way in which the shellfish industry is currently operating. We would be interested to know if any of the above issues are on your research agenda. Because of our experience locally we have serious concerns about the potential for negative impact of the industry on the environment and equally serious concerns about the negative social impact.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly

**Patricia J. McLaughlin, Chair
Denman Island Marine Stewardship Committee**

**c.c. Brian Kingzett
Dr. James Lunney, M.P.
Hon. Gail Shea**