

EDEN SEA FARMS
PO Box 213 Eden NSW 2548

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

12 November 2013

Dear Minister

Re - Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Leases Jervis Bay , NSW

I write in support of the proposed establishment of Commercial Shellfish leases within Jervis Bay. I am a Director of Eden Sea Farms the only commercial mussel farm in NSW holding some 49 hectares within Twofold Bay Eden, NSW.

We would welcome expansion of our industry within NSW where in general marine aquaculture has been neglected to the detriment of the State and Australia. Most other states have a thriving diverse aquaculture industry and while NSW has been a leader in oyster farming, inertia has prevented us developing other marine aquaculture undertakings especially those of a economic and environmentally sustainable nature. This is in the light of a decline in the commercial fishing industry highlighted by the closure due to reduced input of fish of the Eden Fishermans Cooperative.

Mussel farming within Twofold Bay has been operating in various forms for + 20 years with a major expansion some 10 years ago when the current mussel farming operation expanded with the addition of 32 hectares granted as Aquaculture Leases.

This expansion encountered considerable opposition from ill informed commentators. This resulted in significant costs to the proponents who had to undertake various studies to establish additional base line data before the leases were granted.

We undertook and continue independent scientific benthic studies at considerable expense to monitor the impacts if any of the farm on the harbour bottom under the farm and to date there has been no measurable impacts found.

Extrapolating from our experiences in Twofold Bay it can reasonably be argued that there would be no deleterious effects in the area proposed for mussel farms in Jervis Bay given the current flows within the Bay and infrastructure proposed.

We were subject to a number of objections concerning infrastructure and mussel shell washing up on beaches and while there was some initial impact resulting from failures in old raft infrastructure the newer longline structures has minimised the loss of material and we do not receive complaints from the public and in fact find them very helpful in informing us of occasional floats that wash up after a heavy weather event.

Concerns' regarding visual impact of the longlines was another additional study that had to be undertaken and despite vocal claims that the farms would be an eyesore the experience of the last 10 years confirms the conclusions of the study that the farm would not impact adversely on the outlook from the shore. In fact the farm has become a tourist attraction with the cruise boats regularly visiting the lease site.

There is a considerable demand from tourists for our product and interest in the process when they visit the wharf where mussels are cleaned for market with significant numbers of visitors saying they cannot get quality mussels at home.

This allows interplay with our staff and helps visitors gain an understanding of the strict environmental and Safe Food requirements that Australian quality seafood has to meet that a lot of imported product does not have to comply with. A similar interaction is likely in Jervis Bay that can only enhance the public's understanding of the need to protect our marine environment.

We encountered a lot of concerns from the public and various government agencies re the potential for marine animal entanglements. Given that Twofold Bay is a major stopover point in the whale migration route between the tropical waters of Queensland and Antarctic waters we are very conscious of the potential for such occurrences but in the 10 years of longlines there has been no such occurrence. Furthermore there is a significant dolphin and seal population within the Bay – a major tourist attraction when whales are not present – and again there have been no problems encountered. As Jervis Bay longlines will be constructed similarly to our infrastructure I can see no reason why any entanglements will occur.

Accordingly I would support the expansion of NSW's marine aquaculture industry with the establishment of Commercial Aquaculture Leases in Jervis Bay.

Yours sincerely

Chris Boyton

Director

Eden Sea Farms