



March 17, 2023

Mr. Colin Plant
Chair
Capital Region District Board
c/o Ms. Dawn Sheppard
< Dsheppard@crd.bc.ca >

Dear Mr. Plant:

Thank you for your correspondence of January 23, 2023, requesting that red algae *Asparagopsis* be considered for listing on the marine invasive species list and that permit requirements for aquatic plant aquaculture in British Columbia (BC) be reviewed.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) takes the threat posed by aquatic invasive species (AIS) very seriously, and is committed to preventing the entry, spread, and establishment of AIS in Canadian waters. In response to the threat posed by AIS, the Department works closely with provinces and territories to enforce the [Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations](#) (the Regulations) which came into effect on May 29, 2015.

The Regulations detail prohibitions against importation, possession, transportation, and release that apply to AIS listed in Parts 2 and 3 of the schedule. Additionally, the Regulations contain a general prohibition against the introduction of any aquatic species into an area where it is not indigenous, unless an authorization is provided. This could include non-native species such as, but not limited to, algae (*Asparagopsis* or otherwise), which are not indigenous anywhere in Canada.

The general prohibition in the Regulations against the introduction of any non-indigenous species helps to protect Canada's fisheries and aquatic ecosystems from circumstances where potentially harmful species have not been individually listed in the Regulations. However, as you note in your letter, the Regulations do not list all AIS. DFO is currently developing a process for prioritizing new AIS for listing under the Regulations. This work is occurring in close collaboration with provinces and territories and will incorporate scientific information, including results from screening level, biological, and socio-economic risk analyses, as well as cost-benefit analyses required under Canada's regulatory process.

DFO is committed to developing regulations and policies through engagement and early discussions with Canadians. These initiatives will be carried out according to the [Cabinet Directive on Regulation](#) (the Directive). The Directive specifies that early engagement with the public is highly recommended prior to the regulatory amendment process. Prior to adding species to the Regulations, the Department will follow the Directive and will develop a public consultation and engagement process that adheres to this standard.

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Regarding your request to review permit requirements for land- and ocean-based commercial production of seaweed, if a proposal does not include the production of farmed fish, a DFO aquaculture licence is not required. The Province of British Columbia is responsible for the management of provincial Crown land, the issuance of tenures, and the commercial harvest of marine plants.

Information on the regulations or requirements for cultivating aquatic plants can be found on BC's [aquatic plant culturing](#) webpage, or by contacting the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, by telephone at 1-800-663-7867 or by email at < servicebc@gov.bc.ca >.

Thank you for writing to share your concerns. As you note, collaboration with the Province of British Columbia is essential to fighting AIS, and DFO will continue to work closely with provincial counterparts to prevent the introduction and spread of new species.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Murray', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Honourable Joyce Murray, P.C., M.P.