



3 April 2011

Brian Kavanah  
Director, Division of Water Quality Management  
Division of Water Quality Management  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection  
State House Station #17  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Mr. Kavanah,

Friends of Blue Hill Bay (FOBHB) is writing in response to the recent issuance by Maine Department of Environmental Protection of a Maine Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MEPDES) permit #MEG130000 and Maine Waste Discharge License (WDL) #W009020-5Y-A-N (General Permit), for Atlantic Salmon Aquaculture, to Phoenix Salmon US, Inc for the site at Black Island South (SWAN BIS) located in Frenchboro, Maine.

First of all, we would like to thank Bill Hinkel of the Department for providing us with the 2008 General Permit, the 2011 permit modification, and the 2011 Order for Black Island South. We would also like to thank Matt Young of the Department for providing us with water quality and benthic condition reports from the existing and adjacent Black Island (north) site. This information is invaluable to the citizens of Maine in helping them make informed decisions regarding their waters.

Friends of Blue Hill Bay has reviewed the information and would like to express our extreme concern about issuance of a general permit to Phoenix Salmon at Black Island south site because we are not confident they will be able to comply with the terms and conditions of the General Permit:

1. Phoenix Salmon has a documented history of water pollution problems. According to Department of Marine Resources' own report (DMR Site Review #2010-09, Lewis 2010), the existing adjacent site (Black Island north) "has had a history of organic loading on the south end of the farm." Furthermore, the report raises concerns about water, organics, and pathogen exchange between the two sites thus illustrating the potential impact of the two sites together in one small region.
2. Monitoring reports from both MER Assessment Corporation and the DEP have cited elevated sulfides and *Beggiatoa* spp coverage at the north site. Subsequently DEP issued numerous warnings that the conditions "exceeded warning standards" (DEP 2009) and ultimately the department required the company to create an Environmental Management/Monitoring Plan to address the issues. This irresponsible situation persisted for a year (2009-2010) and there is no evidence to suggest that conditions will be any different at the south site.
3. The number and density of fish grown at the north site was cited by DEP as one of the causes of high organic loading at the north site in 2010. This suggests that the company in question is

either ignorant of the biology of aquaculture sites or is irresponsible in its best management practices. Although the department subsequently required the applicant to reduce stocking levels by 33% at the north site in 2010, there is no mention in the new permit of imposing a stocking-density limit at the south site in order to avoid pollution.

While we applaud Department of Environmental Protection's efforts to monitor for water quality, *Beggiatoa* development, and overall environmental impact at active salmon farms, we strongly advocate that the Department continue diligent monitoring efforts and the citing of violations. We are asking the Department of Environmental Protection to be much more thorough and restrictive in their permitting process. Polluted conditions, as a result of these salmon farms, obviously continue to occur in the state's public waters. Warned violators appear to continue their salmon farming operations unrestrained.

In addition to advocating for stronger and stricter monitoring/permitting, FOBHB is also requesting that the agencies involved start working collaboratively and proactively with citizen stakeholders to address their concerns. To date there has been no attempt to proactively bring together agencies, stakeholders, and scientists to discuss concerns that have been routinely raised. We are suggesting that DMR, DEP, Maine State Planning Office, and Maine Sea Grant come together with stakeholders and scientists to develop improved best management practices and environmental standards for finfish aquaculture. This is not an unprecedented request; there have been numerous similar stakeholder initiatives that have generated productive results (e.g., rockweed harvesting, wild Atlantic salmon restoration, alewife management, Penobscot River dischargers, etc). It is time for Maine state agencies to give equal effort and attention to finfish aquaculture and the citizens of Maine.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Donald Eley  
President  
Friends of Blue Hill Bay

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CC: Norman Olsen, DMR  
CC: Tim Glidden, State Planning Office