

Aquaculture Licence Appeals Board
RE: T05/430, your ref: AP32/2019

Submission Objecting to the Grant of Licences on Sites T05/430A and T05/430B
for Mussels Cultivation by West Cork Seafoods Ltd

We wish to register our strong opposition to the decision by the Minister for the Marine to grant an aquaculture licence to West Cork Seafoods for the cultivation of mussels on site **T05/430A** and **T05/430B**. With generations of family in Gearhies, we have experienced first-hand the significantly negative impacts of the concentration of multiple marine industries along this designated Nationally Important Landscape, including the past and present practices of WestCork Seafoods/Fastnet Mussels. Permission is granted with disregard for the economic and environmental interests of the larger community, as evidenced by the lack of credible response to the dozens of submissions presented for consideration, the lack of evidence supporting reasons for the decision, the absence of an EIS, the lack of engagement with major stakeholders, and despite a petition of 66 names. We ask that the following issues be addressed:

Inadequate Standard of Review

1) The decision is not supported by the evidence-based data derived from the assessments typically conducted to inform development decisions in sensitive environs. The “reasons and considerations for the Minister’s determination to grant the licence” are mere statements. No evidentiary facts are presented to support these “determinations”. “Scientific advice” is not documented evidence. “No significant effects” on wild fisheries and the marine environment, are asserted with no evidence, no data, no assessment, no study of any kind.

2) The site is exposed to frequent high winds, heavy swells and storm surge. The hazardous location is well documented and the Commissioner for Irish Lights has objected to the site. Storm damage caused the release of a quarter million salmon at the nearby sites of Fastnet Mussels (now West Cork Seafoods). A feasible and prudent alternative is to use the existing, unused sites in possession of the applicant: T05/306A, T05/069A, T05/69B and T05/433. In addition, these sites are visually obscured from The Wild Atlantic Way's **Nationally Significant Scenic Route S110**.

Licences T05/430 A&B were applied for by Fastnet Mussels Ltd in 1998. West Cork Seafoods is owned by the same family, continuing Fastnet Mussels' production of Murphy's Irish Seafood following the financial losses after the escape of a quarter million salmon during the Feb 2014 storm. There is no information at all regarding this application being granted or denied, calling into question the legal validity of the current application.

3) The livelihoods of the local fishermen will be adversely affected by these lines. As stated in the objection submitted by the Bantry inshore fishermen:

“We are working this ground and it is an extremely important area for our fisheries. We fish scallops, shrimp, crab and lobsters in this area and we are extremely concerned about the negative effects it will have on these fisheries.”

“A very important factor which we feel wasn't taken into consideration was the impact the mussel farm will have on a natural spawning ground at Glanlough...Herring are an extremely important fishery around Ireland and it is a commonly known fact that the herring stocks are at present trying to be protected and sustained. At the site where the mussel farm is proposed is a natural herring spawning ground and has been an area where herrings have been fished and sustained. We feel that not proper research or consideration was given to the impacts the farm will have to the natural herring spawning ground.”

No study was done to analyze the effects of the mussel lines on these wild fisheries or the economic impact on the fisherman.

4) Bord Failte and Wild Atlantic Way were not included in a review of this application. The proposed lines change the character of the the Goat's Path's magnificent view from wild to commercial, to the significant detriment of the tourism economy. How was it determined “the quality status of the area will not be adversely impacted”? It flies in the face of the 66 submissions by residents who live and run their businesses there, and it is incompatible with the CCC's Core Strategy Objectives for the location's tourism economy:

Core Strategy Objective 4-4 d): recognize the international importance and the importance to the region's tourism economy, of the scenic and landscape qualities of the coastal and upland areas, particularly along the peninsulas in the southwest and to protect these landscapes from inappropriate development.

i) Protect and enhance the natural heritage of the areas coast

Protection of Tourist Assets:

8.2.1 County Cork has a wide range of nationally significant tourism assets, namely: the West Cork Peninsulas (Beara, Mizen, Sheep's Head) - with their unique visual amenity and landscape character.

13.7.1 The county contains many vantage points from which view and prospects of great natural beauty may be obtained over both seascape and rural landscape. This scenery and landscape is of enormous amenity value to residents and tourists and constitutes a valuable economic asset. The protection of this asset is therefore of primary importance in developing the potential of the County. Therefore, **the plan identifies specific Scenic Routes consisting of important and valued views and prospects within the county....It is important to protect the character and quality of those particular stretches of scenic routes that have special views and prospects particularly those associated with High Value Landscapes. (Scenic Rte S110:The Goat's Path)**

5) The Minister and Department excluded the participation of the major stakeholders and the surrounding community in informing the decision. A proper review, beyond the narrow, self-serving interests of the applicant, necessitates an analysis of the significant effects on the affected area, the affected interests, and the specific locality. Piece-meal, incremental development is bad practice that goes against prudent planning, as noted by State policies at every level.

Adverse Effects on the Tourism Economy

1) This area is a nationally designated **Very High Value Landscape, Very High Sensitivity Landscape and Nationally Important Landscape, an “Area of Strategic Tourism Potential”** . Inshore fisheries, cycling and boating, craft shops, B&B and restaurant businesses support the people who have lived in this area for generations. These lines are detrimental to these businesses which generate far more income for

many more people than any value or employment opportunities produced by these lines. The over-concentration of marine industry in this location has seriously degraded heritage, landscape and seaviews, the very resources that form the basis of Sheep's Head Peninsulas's critical tourist economy. Continued expansion extends the documented adverse effects already suffered by the area residents and businesses.

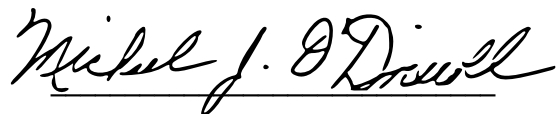
State objectives for the economic survival of the peninsulas' residents emphasize "inshore fisheries, tourism, leisure and associated hospitality businesses are generally small, family owned and supporting people who have lived in these remote parts for generations. It is these small businesses that sustain the communities, keeping generations in these remote coastal parts." No assessment has been examined the effects on these businesses.

2) The Minister states "The proposed development should have a positive effect on the economy of the local area. "Should have" is hardly a ringing endorsement, and the statement is unsupported. A review of the performance of the marine industries would reveal that these have been problematic, and should have informed the decision. Bantry Bay Seafood is a failed business, and after financial difficulties, Fastnet Mussels has re-emerged as West Cork Seafoods (same family). In contrast, the many tourism enterprises among the residents of the area have demonstrated the capacity for sustainability.

3) Fastnet Mussels/West Cork Seafoods has breached conditions with impunity. The property is used as a dump for garbage and solid waste clearly visible from The Wild Atlantic Way, adjoining properties, the sea.

Responsible, sustainable development of Sheep's Head Peninsula within this dramatically impressive stretch of The Wild Atlantic Way, necessitates a considered, integrated, planned process that supports Tourism as the driving force of the Sheep's Head economy. Industrial infrastructure on land and sea, solid waste dumping, and heavy articulated transport have significantly damaged the character of this magnificent coastline, with serious loss of natural and residential amenities.

Respectfully Yours,



Michael J. & Donna A. O'Driscoll
January 13 2020

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