

NSARB-2022-AFF-003

My name is Marc Genuist. When we moved to Town Point it was with full knowledge that we came to rural Nova Scotia. But, we never believed that Antigonish harbour was a National Park nor any different than other beautiful harbours in the province. Our neighbours include dairy farms and commercial fishers, There's a working quarry with explosions, and rock crushing operations to make gravel. There is also constant construction of new houses where the owners have often clear cut the land down to the water. It's still a beautiful area but there are trade-offs and we are willing to accept them in order to live here.

We chose Town Point because we are avid kayakers. We've taken many courses and continue to take high end training to improve our skills. I am now certified as a level 3 sea kayaker with Paddle Canada.

I have paddled and successfully rolled my kayak back up in the tide rips off Brier Island, and done the same on the tidal bore of the Shubenacadie River. I've also organized multi day trips off Anticosti Island, the Eastern Shore and paddled in Newfoundland but most of my kayaking is on the harbour from our home. I paddle usually from April till freeze up.

I would like to deal with points a) the optimum use of marine resources, e) the other users of the public waters and f) the public right of navigation. I'm not an expert. These are my personal observations from kayaking trips in all 3 Maritime Provinces where I've either seen or paddled among oyster or mussel farms.

In New Brunswick I have encountered oyster cages in Bouctouche Bay and Shediac Bay. On PEI I have done the same at French River and Malpeque Bay and I've paddled among the mussel farms of Brudenell bay next to Brudenell Provincial Park. In Nova Scotia I have seen oyster farms in Havre Boucher and Merigomish Harbour.

On PEI the level of recreational boating, number of marinas and lobster boats were exponentially superior to anything I have ever experienced in Antigonish Harbour. All this commercial and recreational traffic is organized through marked channels adjacent to the shellfish farms. In my view, the shell fish farms appeared to be operating harmoniously among recreational boaters and lobster fishers. I think, with similar good faith, this can also be done in Antigonish?

In NB between Bouctouche and Shediac there are many marinas, hundreds of lobster fishers and a multitude of recreational boaters. When we lived in Moncton, we were members of the Atlantic Kayak Association which organized weekly paddles in the area in the summer. We often saw or paddled among oyster cages and nobody appeared to have any issues with this. In Bouctouche bay, the oysters are grown next to the popular tourist attraction the Bouctouche Dune Irving eco-center. Those dunes are famous for being a protected habitat for the piping plover. Bouctouche Bay is also home to the Pays de la Sagouine, a small island that is home to a theme park and theatre that is an extremely popular tourist attraction. I am unaware of any conflict in Bouctouche Bay among these tourism opportunities, protected habitats, and the oyster growers. One would expect that tourists consider eating seafood as a highlight of their trip to the region. I think Antigonish can aspire to do the same.

In Nova Scotia, in Havre Boucher I paddled up to the owner of the oyster farm in the fall of 2021. I didn't ask for his name but in our conversation he told me he was a local boy who was tired of going to Alberta to work. This was his opportunity to make a living close to home. I think Antigonish harbour is well placed to offer the same opportunities to local people.

In Merigomish Harbour the oyster farm is using the BOBR technology developed in partnership with Mr. Ernie Porter. Compared to the traditional square box cages used in the other harbours; the BOBR cages, from this kayaker's point of view, have a significantly lower profile and are certainly more discreet.

I also volunteer with the Antigonish boat club to take novice kayakers out on the water in the summer. Whether alone, with friends, or accompanying kayakers from the boat club we are always surprised at how little boat traffic there is on our harbour. Often, even on beautiful calm days, we are the only ones on the water.

In my experience, for safety reasons, most kayakers tend to paddle along the shore. But if we do venture out to cross the oyster farm I would foresee little risk of collision as there will be a 10 meter separation between the lines of oysters on the farm and 1 meter between the individual BOBRs.

I have no concerns about the proposed oyster farm affecting the ability of other boaters to use the harbour. I would in fact suggest that the regular presence of oyster farm workers on the harbour would add a level of safety for the comparatively few recreational boaters enjoying our waters. I think all safety conscious boaters would welcome the extra set of eyes and assistance in case of an emergency.

I also can't subscribe to the arguments that other users of the water will be seriously affected nor will the public right of navigation be in jeopardy. I believe those who wrote in to say they have kayaked among oyster farms have also said they see no issue here. As for the other boaters, there will be about 250 meters between the oyster farm and the nearest shoreline. That is more than enough water for any craft found on our harbour to find a way around this farm. After all the beam of the Queen Mary 2 is 45 meters. Of course, I'm not saying the QM2 can sail into Antigonish but it tells me that there is room in the harbour for all to continue to enjoy it if this Oyster Farm is allowed to proceed.

In conclusion, I am a full time resident at Town Point. I pay provincial and federal income tax and welcome this sustainable development project in Antigonish that will contribute to the economy. We live next to the Porter family. They are wonderful people who we consider our friends. The Porters are exemplary members of the Boat Club having helped out with many projects to embellish the facilities. Ernie has plowed the road at his expense countless times in the winter. He supervised the construction of our garage. He and his sons have given us helpful advice on all sorts of construction or home repair questions. I'm impressed the Porter family had the vision to propose an environmentally sustainable business that has the potential to become the world class reference for how to grow oysters. For me, the fact the view from my house will change is a small trade-off for seeing the marine resources of the harbour used optimally for my community and my province.