



Accountability Report 2022–23

Fisheries & Aquaculture



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department for the year ended March 31, 2023, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Department outcomes necessarily include estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Department's management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department's management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture's 2022-23 Business Plan.

Original Signed by

Minister Steve Craig _____

Original Signed by

Deputy Minister April Howe _____

Measuring Our Performance

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture aims to be a global leader in fisheries and aquaculture for the benefit of all Nova Scotians by stewarding the innovation and sustainable growth of our sectors. In 2022-23 we developed, promoted, and supported Nova Scotia's fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing, and sportfishing industries by undertaking the following priority initiatives:

Aquaculture Regulatory Review

The Department contracted an independent consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive review of the regulatory framework to support low impact sustainable aquaculture under the guidance of the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Regulatory Advisory Committee. Engagement with partners and the public informed the review, including 43 meetings with partners and stakeholders and 988 responses to a public survey. In March 2023, a [What we Heard Summary Report](#) was published, and the Advisory Committee's [Final Report and Recommendations](#) was submitted to the Department. The Minister accepted the report, and the Department is developing a plan to address the recommendations.

Coastal Classification System

A Coastal Classification System is being developed for the Department to help proactively identify potentially suitable sites for finfish aquaculture. The Department hired a project manager to oversee development of the Coastal Classification System and is working with the Centre for Marine Applied Research (CMAR) to collect high resolution coastal data and conduct modelling to support the identification of suitable sites. This is a multi-year initiative planned for implementation in 2024-25.

Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

The Climate Change Readiness Framework guides the Department's work to support climate change readiness in our sectors. The Department received a funding allotment from 2022-23 to 2026-27 under the Department of Environment and Climate Change's [Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth](#) budget. The funding will be used to enhance our understanding of potential climate change impacts and provide mechanisms to help industry adapt to and mitigate climate change.

The Department continued its program to support energy saving opportunities in the seafood processing sector and provincially owned fish hatcheries with the Department's dedicated Onsite Energy Manager (OEM) contracted through Efficiency Nova Scotia. The OEM has helped the seafood industry save an average of \$7 on energy costs for every \$1 invested in upgrades and as of June 2023, reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 3,932 metric tons. The Department also continued work with CMAR to assess the vulnerability of Nova Scotia's lobster fisheries and critical coastal infrastructure to climate change.

Fish Buyer and Processor Licensing Review

The Department continued to review Nova Scotia's regulatory framework on fish buyer and processor licensing and is continuing consultation with industry and partners on potential regulatory and policy changes. A dedicated licensing team was established to administer the licensing system and ensure specialized and efficient client services. The Department invested in a new licensing database to modernize our systems and support the new licensing unit and made online payment available for clients.

Atlantic Fisheries Fund

The [Atlantic Fisheries Fund](#) (AFF) is a cost-shared partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada that supports Nova Scotia's seafood sector to meet growing market demand for high-quality, value-added, and sustainably sourced seafood through strategic innovative technologies. In 2022-23, 31 projects were approved in Nova Scotia through the AFF, with total project costs of \$20.4M. This includes provincial and federal AFF contributions of \$12.7M.

Nova Scotia Sportfishing Strategy

The Department is supporting growth of Nova Scotia's sportfishing sector through the Sportfishing Strategy, which focuses on increasing awareness and participation in sportfishing and promoting Nova Scotia as a sportfishing destination. The [Fish Nova Scotia](#) website was launched to help anglers identify fishing areas and species in Nova Scotia, and sportfishing opportunities were successfully marketed to other provinces using the Fish Nova Scotia brand.

Work is ongoing to improve access to sportfishing for people with disabilities. The online licensing system was updated to make it easier for anglers with disabilities to apply for a sportfishing license. In March 2023, the Department added an additional barrier-free sportfishing site: McKeen's Pool on the St. Mary's River. The Department is committed to reviewing the accessibility of sportfishing sites and continuing to develop additional sites for a wide range of disabilities, as part of the [Nova Scotia's 2022-2025 Accessibility Plan](#).

Market Development

The Department continued to support and promote Nova Scotia's premium seafood products in international seafood markets. In 2022, fish and seafood products were Nova Scotia's largest export commodity, with \$2.6 billion exported to almost 62 countries. The Department worked to advance international trade agreements, partnerships, and promotions for Nova Scotia seafood, and supported industry trade shows in Asia, the US, and the EU. Nova Scotia is known for its quality seafood, and seven Nova Scotia seafood companies were certified under [the Nova Scotia Seafood Quality Program](#) to represent our seafood brand.

The Department collaborated with industry partners on market and economic impact research relating to both the international and local seafood sectors, including opportunities for under-marketed Nova Scotia seafood species. The Department continued to engage and support the industry through communications and marketing of a buy-local message, as part of the Department of Economic Developments' [Nova Scotia Loyal Framework](#).

Education and Experience

The Department promoted our seafood and sportfishing sectors to youth to encourage participation and develop exciting career opportunities. In 2022-23, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Student Bursary program was delivered in partnership with the Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council under the brand [Team Seafood](#) to provide a connection between youth and careers in the seafood industry. The Department initiated collaboration with the Department of Education to develop the Marine Education Strategy, aimed towards P-12 students in Nova Scotia, to guide educational content being delivered on the province's seafood sector. Guidebooks were created and will be available for educator use in 2023-24. To provide education and experiences in sportfishing, the [Learn to Fish](#) program was delivered as a hybrid model as a transition toward enhanced information sharing for youth.

Financial Results

	2022- 2023 Estimate	2022-2023 Actuals	2022- 2023 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)		
Departmental Expenses:			
Administration	1,216	1,186	(30)
Policy and Corporate Services	965	913	(52)
Aquaculture	5,391	5,084	(307)
Inland Fisheries	2,548	3,240	692
Marine Fisheries	6,936	6,288	(648)
Marketing	642	622	(20)
Total Departmental Expenses	17,698	17,333	(365)
Additional Information:			
Revenues	794	784	(10)
Fees and Other Charges	1,001	991	(10)
Ordinary Recoveries	500	658	158
Total: Fees and Recoveries	2,295	2,433	138
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	83.2	77.6	(5.6)
Departmental Expenses Variance Explanations: Miscellaneous operational savings across the department.			
Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation: Miscellaneous increases across the department. (Mainly FHOSA)			
TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation: N/A.			
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation: Unfilled positions mainly related to Aquaculture.			

Public Interest and Wrongdoing Act

Annual Report under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations;
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets;
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment; or,
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2022-2023
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	0
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	0