

**SEP 17 2003**

Ms. Donna Martin  
225 South Bank Drive  
Salt Spring Island BC V8K 1M7

Dear Ms. Martin:

Thank you for your letter of July 28, and information package concerning the proposed aquaculture development on Salt Spring Island's Walker Hook.

My department strongly encourages the protection of the remaining sensitive ecosystems on the east coast of Vancouver Island. Our Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory maps show that there are three ecosystem types represented on Walker Hook: salt marsh wetland, sparsely vegetated gravel spit and a coastal bluff/woodland complex. Few examples of these sensitive ecosystems remain in the Gulf Islands and thus every effort should be made to conserve them.

This site has been recognized as having high conservation value by the federal/provincial Georgia Basin Ecosystem Conservation Partnership. Wetlands such as the salt marshes at Walker Hook are particularly rare on the Gulf Islands and vulnerable to human disturbance. Changes to wetland hydrology can have significant impacts on the viability of any wetland; even limited changes in nitrogen or phosphorous levels can reduce the zone in which specific wetland organisms can survive. Coastal bluffs and sparsely vegetated spits are similarly rare and fragile and deserving of our conservation efforts.

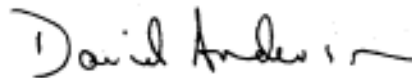
Environment Canada lacks regulatory authority over aquaculture approvals. However, notwithstanding this lack of regulatory power, I have directed my staff at the Qualicum National Wildlife Area to contact the appropriate regulatory authorities and express our misgivings about the nature and location of the proposed development.

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I also encourage you to contact the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries as well as other agencies with regulatory authority over this matter to express your concerns. I support your efforts to conserve this ecologically valuable site and appreciate your having taken the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

David Anderson, P.C., M.P.