

Environmental guidelines for completion of PIRSA aquaculture lease conversions

EPA Requirements—information for applicants

Updated March 2016¹

EPA 653/16: This guideline explains to applicants what information is required by the Environment Protection Authority to make an environmental assessment of their aquaculture lease conversion application which is processed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)².

Introduction

In accordance with provisions of the *Aquaculture Act 2001*, lease conversion applications (other than those located within an aquaculture zone) must be referred to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) before that lease conversion can occur.

The EPA must, in determining its response to the application, have regard to and seek to further the objects of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* and have regard to the general environmental duty and any relevant environment protection policies under this Act.

The EPA is reliant on a range of information to support its decision-making process. This includes information and advice from PIRSA, the information contained within the application and access to historical environmental monitoring data.

This guideline describes information the EPA requires to assess the lease conversion application. The EPA seeks confirmation that the lessees have a demonstrated capability to meet their general environmental duty, and subsequently encourage lease conversion applicants to provide as much detailed information as possible to support their application.

Potential environmental issues

Whilst the EPA is interested in all aspects of the farming operation, its principal concern lies with activities that may generate pollution-based environmental issues. The EPA will therefore be seeking confirmation the applicant has historically been able and will continue to undertake aquaculture activities on the site with minimal environmental impact.

¹ Updated according to *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2015*.

² PIRSA Aquaculture manages the aquaculture lease conversion process. Consequently all lease conversion applications or enquiries should in the first instance be forwarded to PIRSA (telephone 8226 0900). Following their assessment, PIRSA then forwards the application to the EPA for consideration. It should be noted this document does not replace any requirements stipulated by PIRSA Aquaculture as part of their formal lease conversion process.

The environmental issues of specific interest to the EPA include:

- status of the benthic environment
- historical and potential future impacts on seagrass or other aquatic vegetation
- current and future waste management practices (in particular mortalities and biofouling)
- water quality issues
- chemical use on the site.

Much of this information should be provided as part of the annual environmental monitoring report undertaken by the licensee in accordance with requirements of the Aquaculture Act.

General

The EPA can only make its assessment based on the information presented. The EPA is unable to make basic assumptions of farm practices and applicants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible (including, where appropriate, photographs or video) of the site/activity.

The EPA recognises that some level of impact is likely on each site and will be interested in how the applicant has historically managed that impact, whether the impact has been confined within the lease boundary, and what management measures have been implemented to minimise the extent of that impact.

Environmental monitoring information

According to the Aquaculture Act, all aquaculture licensees must undertake annual environmental monitoring of their sites.

As lease conversions generally occur a number of years after the issuing of the initial lease and corresponding licence, development would have usually occurred on the site and historical environmental monitoring information should be readily available. The EPA will obtain and assess this information to endorse a lease conversion. All licensees are encouraged to actively participate in their environmental monitoring requirements and be prepared to fully justify on environmental grounds as to why access to the site should continue.

All lease conversion applicants should ensure they have met their legislative requirements in terms of undertaking and reporting monitoring results. The information gathered by the applicant as part of that process must be adequate for the EPA to determine whether environmental impacts have or have not occurred. Applicants are encouraged to provide detailed environmental information which may exceed their basic legislative requirements.

The EPA is interested in any monitoring results that may exist for similar activities. For instance, beyond site-specific monitoring data, information may be available which refers to specific sectors or regions as a whole, and this information may be useful for applicants to help justify the extent of impact that might occur for a specific activity on a specific site.

In the absence of useful environmental monitoring data, the EPA has no option but to oppose the application.

Environmental checklist

The following section provides a checklist to assist the applicant in providing information about their lease conversion. The applicant is reminded this document does not replace any of the requirements imposed by PIRSA as part of their formal lease conversion process. If the information present in the application is inadequate, the EPA will be required to oppose the application or at least request further information, which may lead to delays in the assessment process.

The information that is provided with the lease conversion application should aim to:

- give a clear and detailed explanation on the activity that has and will continue to occur on the site
- identify whether any environmental impacts have occurred on the site, and what management arrangements have been implemented to address those impacts
- identify all potential impacts that may be associated with the operation of the site
- describe any strategies that may be taken to minimise the potential for environmental impacts.

Please tick box when issues have been addressed

- Has historical environmental monitoring data, prepared in accordance with Aquaculture Act responsibilities, been provided?
- Is the environmental monitoring data that has been provided of a suitable quality to determine whether the farm has operated with minimum impact?
- If impact has occurred, is it confined within the boundaries of the lease site?
- Is environmental monitoring data for similar sites, regions or sectors available, and has it been provided?
- Provide a scaled map of site showing all structures associated with the aquaculture development, proximity of seagrass (or other sensitive habitats) and where structures have been or will be placed in relation to that sensitive habitat.
- Include photographs or video of the proposed site, with particular reference to ecologically sensitive areas (e.g. seagrass beds, kelp reefs, etc.).
- Describe in detail the type of culture system that is used including what individual components will be included in the system, and how this will operate without environmental impact. Photographs and illustrations are particularly useful for describing system design.
- Describe other potential sources of environmental impact (e.g. scouring/shading) and what management arrangements will be implemented to minimise the risk of that impact.

Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. This publication seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. In doing so, however, some detail may not be captured. It is important, therefore, that you seek information from the EPA itself regarding your possible obligations and, where appropriate, that you seek your own legal advice.

Further information

Legislation

[Online legislation](#) is freely available. Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet
Adelaide Service SA Centre
108 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24
Facsimile: (08) 8204 1909
Website: shop.service.sa.gov.au
Email: ServiceSAcustomerservice@sa.gov.au

General information

Environment Protection Authority
GPO Box 2607
Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: (08) 8204 2004
Facsimile: (08) 8124 4670
Freecall: 1800 623 445 (country)
Website: www.epa.sa.gov.au
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