

## **Approved exceptions to Salmon Standard place ASC's integrity at risk, accreditation partner finds**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VANCOUVER — On Friday, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council's third-party accreditation partner, Accreditation Services International, released a complaint investigation report that finds the ASC is “probably putting at risk the program integrity” by granting exceptions, known as variances, that can change the original intent of the Salmon Standard.

The report is a result of formal complaints submitted by SeaChoice partner organization, Living Oceans Society, in regard to the ASC certification of two B.C. salmon farms by auditors despite dangerously high lice levels. During their first production cycles as ASC-certified farms, Marsh Bay farm peaked at 23.77 mature sea lice per fish and Monday Rock at 19.68. ASC has granted variances that allow B.C. farms to avoid compliance with the ASC sea lice limit of 0.1 female lice per fish and instead defer to local regulations that have a three motile (mature) lice per fish trigger.

“In practical application, auditors treat the variances as a loose management objective. No B.C. farms are held to a maximum limit on sea lice abundance,” said Kelly Roebuck, SeaChoice representative from Living Oceans. “ASI's findings acknowledge that the sea lice variances could well put ASC's credibility at risk.”

ASI asked ASC to clarify its interpretation of the sea lice variations, but the ASC did not do so. ASI also recommended that public consultation should come before any variance is granted that would alter the intent of ASC's Salmon Standard. SeaChoice has previously suggested that public and expert consultation should be required whenever a variance might have the effect of weakening the standard.

Recently, SeaChoice formally asked the ASC to rescind the sea lice variances after ASC-certified farms in Clayoquot Sound reported lice levels as high as 34 mature lice per fish. Unfortunately, the ASC has allowed the variances to remain in place, without clarification or further guidance to auditors.

- End -

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## SeaChoice:

SeaChoice is a collaboration of three internationally recognized organizations — the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society — that use their broad, national expertise to find solutions for healthy oceans. SeaChoice is a science-based, solutions-focused influencer, advocate and watchdog leading the next evolution of seafood sustainability in Canada. SeaChoice is a member organization of the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions, and works with consumers, retailers, suppliers, government and producers to accomplish its objectives.

## Backgrounder:

Accreditation Services International [complaint investigation report](#).

Accreditation Services International [general complaints page](#) – information on ASI and their complaints procedure.

## The ASC salmon standard

The ASC salmon standard was created in 2012 following a multi-stakeholder process known as the Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue. The standard is assessed by criteria designed to eliminate or minimize the environmental and social impacts of aquaculture. Third-party auditing companies assess farm clients against the standard and grant certification. Version 1.1 of the standard was published in May 2017. Further information: [www.asc-aqua.org](http://www.asc-aqua.org)

## ASC variances and process

Variance requests allow third-party auditors to seek an ASC interpretation of, or variance from, either a salmon standard criterion or audit requirements. The variance-request process can be used for any of the eight ASC species standards. Of the 263 variance requests currently listed on the ASC website, as of May 10, 2018, 138 apply to the salmon standard alone.

## The ASC approved sea lice variances

Sea lice variances (no. 88 and 141) defer to Fisheries and Oceans' Pacific Aquaculture Regulation, which allows three motile *L. salmonis* per fish instead of the salmon standard's threshold of 0.1 female lice per fish during sensitive wild fish migration periods. These variances have been applied to benefit *all* B.C. salmon farms. Audit evidence shows auditors routinely cite the variance number and the PAR regime, but do not record or restrict the actual number of lice per fish in recommending certification. Further information: [www.seachoice.org/our-work/eco-labels/asc-variances-and-process](http://www.seachoice.org/our-work/eco-labels/asc-variances-and-process)  
[www.seachoice.org/our-work/eco-labels/whats-behind-the-label-report](http://www.seachoice.org/our-work/eco-labels/whats-behind-the-label-report)





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