

Ships to monitor fish farms

Brian Kieran
Black Press

CAMPBELL RIVER — The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is assigning six new vessels to monitor fish farming activity on the West Coast and five will be stationed in Campbell River.

In Campbell River on Monday, Fisheries and Oceans Minister Keith Ashfield said the B.C.-built vessels will all be dedicated to the BC Aquaculture Regulatory Program.

Three of the vessels — the Salmon Bay, the Sturgeon Bay and the Oyster Bay — will conduct fish health management inspections, sea lice audits, stream surveys, ocean floor sampling and fish farm inspections.

The other three vessels — the MacLeod Bay, the Weaver Bay and the Maz Bay — will transport fisheries officers as they perform routine and surprise site inspections and enforce aquaculture regulations.

"As the majority of aquaculture operations are located along the coast of Vancouver Island and in the mainland inlets and most are inaccessible by car, ensuring DFO staff are able to move freely on the water is an important aspect of regulating the aquaculture industry in B.C.," Ashfield said.

"The new vessels will allow fisheries officers to respond quickly to events or public reports of potential concerns at farm sites, while staff on the aquaculture management vessels can deploy tethered underwater vehicles

DFO

for site inspections and analyze benthic (ocean bottom) sampling."

The enforcement vessels were named in honour of Ronald MacLeod, a retired DFO employee and an Officer of the Order of Canada; fisheries officer Ken Weaver, who died in a plane crash in 1948; and, retired fisheries office Max Tscharre.

In December 2010, DFO assumed responsibility for the regulation of B.C.'s aquaculture sector including the licensing of marine finfish, shellfish and freshwater aquaculture sites.

Ashfield was asked

about union concerns regarding Coast Guard cutbacks, specifically a suggestion the Coast Guard can't predict when low-volume hours will occur because emergencies have a way of happening when you least expect them.

"Well, emergencies

happen but it's not like we are not going to have people on staff being there and able to handle the calls," Ashfield responded.

"That's not the case at all. So, I'm quite confident that this will work. We are not going to put people's lives at risk."

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The applicant must have or be willing to obtain a strata manager's license.

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Ashfield announced funding
PHOTO BY BRIAN KIERAN / BLACK PRESS

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developing new technologies that will make our country a world leader in aquaculture, and create jobs and opportunities here at home."

Nationally, aquaculture production has increased four-fold in the past 20 years. About 70 per cent of Canadian aquaculture products are sold to foreign markets.

The B.C aquaculture industry provides an estimated 6,000 jobs and more than \$224 million in wages, Ashfield said.

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