

Dec 18 2013

Chronicle Herald

Sea scum in Jordan Bay worries residents

BRIAN MEDEL YARMOUTH BUREAU

Published December 18, 2013 - 8:04pm

Fisheries official says foam in ocean 'natural' after storms



This extensive, rather thick mat of foam floated off West Green Harbour earlier this week in Jordan Bay where two open pen salmon farming sites are located. Residents have been photographing the sea scum and want to know more about it. (CONTRIBUTED)

YARMOUTH — More mats of sea scum have been seen floating in Jordan Bay this week, and that has some folks wondering where the substance is coming from.

A resident living on the eastern side of the bay said Wednesday he saw a large clot of sea foam and wondered if it was related to aquaculture operations.

A resident on the distant western shore of the bay said earlier this week that sea scum has appeared there a few times since midsummer.

“It’s not foam. It’s actually something that you can scoop up with a spoon,” Sindy Horncastle said.

Private testing revealed it was mineral oil.

Mineral oil, Horncastle said, may be used in the aquaculture industry in medicines or treatments.

A resident on the other side of Jordan Bay who asked to remain anonymous said he photographed a large mat of sea scum.

“I have seen that stuff before,” he said. “It was a massive quantity (Monday). I haven’t seen it like that before.

“This is a huge concern.

“I can’t imagine why suddenly this stuff appears on the water.”

Cooke Aquaculture spokeswoman Nell Halse said Wednesday the company does not know where the foam is coming from.

“We had high winds and heavy seas on the weekend, and it is normal for these conditions to generate sea foam,” she said.

A provincial Fisheries & Aquaculture Department source concurred Wednesday that it’s “absolutely natural” to find large accumulations of foam, scum and debris in the ocean after storms.

Halse, Cooke’s vice-president of communications, said “our farms are a half to (a) full kilometre from shore, so it is hard to imagine that anyone could determine that foam on the shore comes from the farms.”

She said more needs to be known about the substance before the media reports again on unfounded allegations.

“Before the fish farm came in, I’d never seen anything like that,” said the resident from the eastern side of the bay.

Since fish farming began, he said, he’s seen smaller quantities of similar-looking stuff floating near shore.

“But I’ve certainly never seen the huge mass that I saw a couple of days ago,” the man said.

Halse said in an email Wednesday that “we are not using any chemicals or pesticides on the farms in Jordan Bay.”

She said vaccines are administered in the hatchery long before any fish are transferred to the farms.

Halse said if fish farm crews are able to locate the substance in question, they will test it.

The province has also said it will test any foam that washes up again.

A Fisheries & Aquaculture employee was unable to find a sufficiently large sample of the foam during a previous visit.

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1174832-sea-scum-in-jordan-bay-worries-residents>