

Nova Scotia: Eastern Shore Residents Celebrate Province's Refusal to Grant New Open Pen Salmon Farm License in Shoal Bay

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The Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture announced this morning that it has refused to grant a license to Snow Island Salmon, Inc., a subsidiary of Scottish aquaculture giant, Loch Duart, for a new salmon aquaculture site in Shoal Bay. Shoal Bay is located on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia near Sheet Harbour; it is part of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

According to a release put out this morning by the Nova Scotia government, "Fisheries and Oceans Canada has raised concerns about the proposed site's potential impact on wild salmon populations. It indicated that the site represents a 'low risk to fish habitat' but a 'moderate risk to wild Atlantic salmon.' It is the first time that Fisheries and Oceans Canada has described a proposed aquaculture site as a 'moderate risk' to wild salmon."

Eastern Shore residents responded with jubilation. "This is wonderful news!" said Dr. Marike Finlay, President of the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore (APES).

"I congratulate the members and supporters of the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore, who have worked so persistently to have their case heard. In the last twelve months, we submitted hundreds of pages to federal and provincial ministries of Fisheries, and to the federal Department of Transport, specifying how Shoal Bay is inappropriate for open pen aquaculture. It is too shallow, too cold, and has too little current to flush properly; it is in prime inshore lobster grounds, and interferes with our tourist industry. It also, clearly, interferes with the recovering wild salmon stocks in the West River of Sheet Harbour."

A proposed Snow Island Salmon open pen site in Spry Harbour faces opposition for similar reasons. “We hope that an announcement will be made soon that it too is inappropriate,” said Dr. Finlay. “Spry Harbour is as unsuitable as Shoal Bay for open pen fish farming. And, as in Shoal Bay, more than 90% of the residents of Spry Harbour are opposed to the imposition of open pen farms in their waters.”

Citizens continue to watch as dead fish are removed from the nearby Owl’s Head farm, operated by Snow Island Salmon. “This is the second time since 2009 that there has been a near total fish kill over the winter at that site,” reported Bill Williams, Vice-President of APES. “Now the sea bottom is again contaminated with fish waste and dead fish. It is time for Snow Island Salmon and Loch Duart to acknowledge that they cannot run salmon feedlots on the Eastern Shore.”

According to Dr. Finlay, “the members of APES will continue to pressure the government not only to place a moratorium on all new licensing of open pen feedlots in the province, but to remove the pens from St. Mary’s Bay, Jordan Bay, Shelburne Harbour and Port Mouton. It is time for Nova Scotia to get out of this destructive, dirty business and begin to invest in the future.”

“Just think how much further ahead Nova Scotia would be if citizens could invest their energies in building exciting new sustainable projects along the coast like a Marine Parks system, or on land closed pen initiatives, rather than fighting short-sighted pollution economy projects like open pen salmon farms.”

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Photo credit Karin Cope karin.cope@gmail.com

Cut line for both photos: Residents of Spry Bay gather around their signs, OPEN PEN FISH FARMS BANNED, posted along Highway #7.