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Sea bottom still toxic in Shelburne, says marine scientist

Timothy Gillespie

Inka Milewski returns to Shelburne July 16



One year after salmon were harvested and the lease surrendered, a study has found that the sea bottom under an open net pen fish farm at Sandy Point in Shelburne Harbour is still toxic and marine life still has not recovered. The former fish farm is the site of a multi-year study examining the recovery of the sea bottom.

Inka Milewski, the study's principal investigator and science advisor for the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, will be in Shelburne on Tuesday, July 16 at 7:00pm at Shelburne Regional High to present her most recent findings.

According to Milewski, copper levels in the sediments exceed levels known to have negative effects on marine organisms and are at levels that prevent biological recovery from occurring. "Federal and provincial regulators are under the mistaken assumption that it takes just a few months to a year for the sea bottom to recover from the effects of massive waste loading, said Milewski. "As these results demonstrate, this is simply not true."

Milewski says that the high levels of copper around fish farms are the result of the anti-foulants used in nets, excretion of more concentrated copper in the fish feces and the accumulation and breakdown of uneaten feed. "The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment have set guidelines for copper levels in marine sediments but there is no enforcement of these guidelines," said Milewski. According to the study's results, sediment copper levels around the former fish farm are up to 10 times higher than other areas within inner Shelburne Harbour and up to 40 times higher than areas in outer Shelburne Harbour.

The Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture granted three new leases to Kelly Cove Salmon, a division of Cooke Aquaculture, in the inner Shelburne Harbour area. All new leases are approximately 100 metres from former farm sites that had poor environmental performance records. Stocking of all salmon farm sites in Shelburne Harbour was put on hold because a highly contagious virus ISA (infectious salmon anemia) was found on a farm site in outer Shelburne Harbour in February 2012.

Milewski says she is disturbed and alarmed that the provincial government has granted a license for the massive fish farm next door in Jordan Bay. "Why would federal and provincial regulators allow such a large fish farms to operate in such shallow waters when they know what the experience has been in Shelburne Harbour, also a shallow-water site" she asked. "It will be the

local fisherman and taxpayers that will be on the hook when, not if, environmental quality begins to deteriorate.”

The Shelburne presentation is open to the public and there is no admission charge.

<http://www.southcoasttoday.ca/content/sea-bottom-still-toxic-shelburne-says-marine-scientist>

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