

## Eastern Shore salmon farms too much of a risk

[By MARIKE FINLAY-DE MONCHY, KARIN COPE and ELISABETH BIGRAS](#)

The Chronicle Herald has published several articles about the proposal for salmon aquaculture in Spry Bay, Shoal Bay and Beaver Harbour on the Eastern Shore.

These have discussed the potential destruction of the local lobster fishery and recovering wild Atlantic salmon by the introduction of these fish farms.

During a recent town hall meeting in Sheet Harbour where the Scottish company Loch Duart and its Nova Scotia subsidiary Snow Island Salmon presented their plans to establish three fish farms, a packed hall forcefully made their "No" message clear to government bureaucrats and politicians.

Armed with scientific information and questions, interveners from the lobster fishery, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, and the Ecology Action Centre made it clear that they considered the implantation of aquaculture on these shores to be a threat to their sustainable fisheries.

Fish farms on the Eastern Shore will also harm tourism, real estate, and the quality of life of current residents. Coastal residents, tourist operators and marine recreation businesses all voiced their views that fish farms would be bad for them.

We have sailed halfway around the world and where we have encountered them, fish farms have created disgusting areas. Take one nearby: Bliss Harbour, N.B., in the Bay of Fundy. Sixteen years ago, on the way to Nova Scotia from Maine, we hauled into Bliss Harbour to wait out some weather. The cruising guide we were using was outdated in its description of the harbour as a place that lived up to its name. Instead we found fish pens, stinking and fouled waters, and shorelines soiled with burnt-out Styrofoam chunks, seared nylon ropes, and rotting fish carcasses.

The diver who tended the pens stopped to chat with us. He explained that while they put huge amounts of pesticides and antibiotics in the pens to fight sea lice and infections, eventually illness prevails. Then they must destroy the pen and its inhabitants, which led to the detritus on the beach. All nearby residences were abandoned. We asked the diver if we could buy some salmon from him. He said that he would never eat anything that came out of those pens, and offered us some tinned herring instead.

But our observations of the destructive impact of fish farming on the environment are not the only reason to refuse to allow it on the Eastern Shore. Scientific research has convincingly

established that fish farming destroys naturally occurring fish stocks and contaminates the waters with both chemicals and huge amounts of fecal matter. There is a reason why residents of British Columbia, Scotland, California, Latin America, and other parts of Nova Scotia are fighting this type of unregulated industrial farming on their coasts.

Recent studies at Stanford University have shown that fish farming is like a feedlot; tidal waters do not manage to clean out the fish feces but rather continually re-circulate this sulphite-laden pollution in the areas close by.

It appears that the NDP government strongly supports aquaculture on the Eastern Shore because it will create jobs. They also claim that this company will try to avoid the "accidents" of other salmon farms.

Loch Duart has reported using Excis and Slice, chemicals used to treat sea lice, in its Scottish operations. The Owls Head operation run by Snow Island has had storm damage to its pens, resulting in salmon escaping.

Would those jobs be worth the risks fish farming poses to the Eastern Shore?

More worrying still is the licensing process. To date, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has never turned down an application for fish farming in Nova Scotia. What is more, if a licence were granted, there would be no public hearings for amendments, such as increasing the density of pens or even selling the operation to another owner.

We know what we have to lose: our existing livelihoods and ways of life.

During our first sailing voyage in Nova Scotia years ago, we anchored in the outer islands of Ship Harbour. It was a warm July evening. The black spruce forests smelled like baked raspberry pie, and Arctic terns circled and dove. You could see deep into the clear water. The Eastern Shore was paradise! We decided to follow the inside passage all the way East. That is how we, three professionals from Montreal, discovered, came to love, and settle permanently on the Eastern Shore.

Residents, both old and new, know what we have. The Eastern Shore is one of Canada's best kept secrets, the forgotten shore. Many people who live here eke out a modest but sustainable living from lobster fishing, lumbering, small businesses, home construction, pensions or creative freelancing. Slowly and sustainably the community is growing with new houses and small businesses gradually springing up. Many of us commute to work because we are so happy to return home.

The Bay of Islands has been made a wildlife bird sanctuary to protect many species of migrating birds. It is forbidden to land on those islands or interfere with the birds during migrating and mating season.

As Scott Cunningham's company, Coastal Adventures, demonstrates, we have some of the world's best kayaking waters here. Taylor's Head Provincial Park draws tourists from around the world. One of the proposed fish farms, in Spry Bay, lies on the western side of the park. In the late summer and early fall the ocean does get warm enough to swim in. Hotels, motels, restaurants, gift shops, galleries, and B&B's all strive to remain viable along Hwy. 7 between Musquodoboit Harbour and Sherbrooke.

One of the largest outcries from the public at the town hall meeting came when it was revealed that while governments have given no funds for the development of the potential wild salmon recovery; Snow Island and Loch Duart have applied for ACOA and provincial funding.

We residents of the Eastern Shore used to complain that we did not get anything from our politicians, so we gave the NDP a chance to do better. We should have been more careful what we wished for. It seems we could get something that is worse than nothing — tons of fish excrement in our front yards and all over everything that matters to us.

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