

Salmon farms proposed for Eastern Shore

Hundreds attend public information session



Hundreds of people attended a public information session in Sheet Harbour to discuss the proposed salmon farms. (CBC)

A Scotland-based company proposing to spend millions of dollars developing three salmon fish farms on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore says it wants to have fish in the water by May.

Snow Island Salmon Inc. — the Canadian subsidiary of Scottish aquaculture company Loch Duart Ltd. — wants to operate salmon farms at Shoal Bay, Spry Harbour and Beaver Harbour.

Snow Island Salmon Inc., which has already taken over an existing fish farm in nearby Owl Head, has applied for finfish leases with the provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

"Our team hopes to put our fish in by May. That will go into the site we currently own and if we have one of the other sites it might go in there," said Nick Joy, the managing director of Loch Duart Ltd.

"We will be putting fish to sea this year and we will be employing people this year."

Loch Duart Ltd. operates what the company bills as environmentally-sustainable salmon farms in Scotland.

Joy said he wants to bring its practices to Nova Scotia, including fewer fish per pen, no antibiotics and longer inactive periods to lessen the environmental impact.

"We take all the equipment out, all the fish out and leave it fallow for a year," said Joy.

"That's the entire bay, not just the little area where the fish were previously."

On Monday night, hundreds of people came out to a public information session in Sheet Harbour to discuss the proposed salmon farms.

There was skepticism among the citizens, who were concerned about the impact of the farms on tourism and on wild salmon. One man asked the company why it would license a salmon farm on two salmon bearing streams.

Joy understands the skepticism but said the fears are not justified. He said the existing fish farm run by the company in Owl Head has no signs of sea lice or other adverse effects on the environment.

Joy said Loch Duart Ltd. is ready to spend millions of dollars to expand.

"We'll farm about 500,000 fish, looking at about 20 employees to start with. That'll grow in time," he said.

"How big? Depends on how big we grow."

The provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture said it will evaluate each site individually and make a decision on the farms in two to six months.