

Salmon group keen to hook investors in land-based farm

The Atlantic Salmon Federation has tossed a line to potential investors in a land-based farming operation for the species.

“There is increasing interest within our organization and on the investor side in a contained on-land salmon farm that would be an alternative to open-net pen salmon aquaculture,” Bill Taylor, president and chief executive officer of the federation, said in an interview.

The federation is especially interested in the success with other species of Sustainable Blue, in Centre Burlington in Hants County, and also in the related Nova Scotia Arctic Char business operated by the Millbrook First Nation near Truro.

The federation has lobbied long and hard against a proliferation in Nova Scotia of offshore salmon farms.

It contends regular escapes from the pens, and disease, threaten the health of local wild salmon and argues the big water-based farms constitute an environmental threat.

These criticisms are dismissed as inaccurate by operators of water-based farms, who contend land-based salmon farming is uneconomical.

The federation has organized a tour Thursday of the Sustainable Blue operation and also of the Millbrook Arctic char operation to drum up interest among potential investors.

Representatives of the federation, together with some potential investors, want to take a first-hand look at these operations.

They could be duplicated to grow salmon or even potentially converted to grow the species, Taylor said.

Although Sustainable Blue grows European sea bass and gilt-head sea bream at Centre Burlington, and Arctic char through its partnership at Millbrook, a conversion to another species is simple, said Jeremy Lee, president of Sustainable Blue.

“We’re not rushing around to find investors and are continuing to increase production of our current species, but we are certainly very capable of growing salmon on land,” Lee said.

Lee specializes in the design of recirculative aquaculture systems that provide consistently clear and clean water and dispose of organic waste on land.

The Atlantic Salmon Federation partnered with The Conservation Fund in the United States last year on a successful effort to grow Atlantic salmon in a similar land-based facility.