

Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore

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April 23, 2012

Members of the Nova Scotia Legislature
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Dear MLA:

We are writing to make sure that you are aware of rising citizen concerns about and widespread opposition to plans to increase open pen finfish aquaculture sites in Nova Scotia. In particular, we want to share some information with you about the proposals by Snow Island Salmon, Inc., a subsidiary of Scottish company, Loch Duart, to install open pen salmon feedlots in Shoal Bay, Spry Harbour and Beaver Harbour on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia.

The Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore (APES) is an organization consisting of hundreds of concerned residents and business people from a variety of sectors on the Eastern Shore, including the Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce, tourism operators, people in the building trades, fishermen and international marketers of lobster and other wild species, as well as representatives of various parks and wilderness groups.

We are concerned that the proposals by Snow Island Salmon/Loch Duart do not meet basic standards set out by the aquaculture industry itself in consultation with the provincial and federal governments (Stantec 2009, Hargrave 2002), and as a consequence, may put a number of existing and potentially healthier sustainable industries on our shore at risk. We are also concerned that an overwhelming number of peer-reviewed international and national scientific studies readily and repeatedly show a variety of serious environmental harms directly attributable to such poorly sited open pen finfish farms. Finally, we have a number of concerns about what we could only call a democratic deficit in this process, beginning with the sham of a public consultation—the only clear zone for public input, and the only required public hearing for all three of the license applications on the Eastern Shore--hosted by the department of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Sheet Harbour on 6 February 2012. Hundreds of people came to that meeting; not all questioners were heard, and few there felt their questions were seriously considered or appropriately answered. And yet there is no other venue where that will happen.

We have, since our formation in mid-February, held two well-attended public educational forums, written thousands of letters to Premier Dexter (who has, as yet, to answer), to Minister Belliveau, and to our local MLAs Jim Boudreau and Sid Prest, as well as to officials at various federal and provincial licensing and review boards. Our petition calling for a moratorium on the granting of open pen finfish feedlot licenses has more

than 3100 signatures at this writing; our facebook group has more than 800 members, and we have joined, with more than 50 other groups from across the province in calling for a moratorium on the granting of further open pen finfish aquaculture licenses in the province of Nova Scotia.

We urge you and the other members of the legislature to take a precautionary approach towards open pen finfish aquaculture in our bays. We believe, as residents and business people on this shore, that we can develop better, more sustainable employment opportunities in our communities than the high-risk low-wage prospects outlined by Snow Island/ Loch Duart.

We want to make it plain that we are not anti-aquaculture. Nova Scotia could clearly be a leader in the aquaculture industry, not a follower. We support appropriately sited closed pen aquaculture when 1) the communities affected have been properly consulted; 2) when stringent independent Environmental Assessments have been made; and 3) when the government's own guidelines have been properly utilized. Such a finfish aquaculture program could be environmentally sustainable, labour intensive and ahead of the curve of the market demand for healthy, sustainable seafood. It would also address most of our concerns about harms to the environment and our existing wild catch and tourism industries, and ensure that the pristine qualities of our coast remain for future generations to enjoy.

We enclose an outline of the research that informs our concerns, a sampling of key objections to the Environmental Impact Assessments for the Eastern Shore, and letters of concern from stakeholders affiliated with our organization.

Sincerely,

Marika Finlay-de Monchy, Ph.D., MSc.
Vice-President, Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore