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EASTERN SHORE RESIDENTS INSIST SCIENTIFIC AND ECONOMIC DATA SUPPORT A CALL FOR A MORATORIUM ON OPEN PEN FINFISH AQUACULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

23 March 2012

Following a community forum on the science, economics, and history of salmon aquaculture in Eastern Canada at the Lion's Center in Sheet Harbour, more than 200 residents voted unanimously to reiterate a call for a moratorium on open pen finfish aquaculture—"until the process for granting or renewing licenses is transparent and repaired of its flaws, and Nova Scotians can be sure that there will be no harm to important existing industries and the environment."

"Independent, objective science on the effects of large-scale open pen feedlots of the sort being proposed for Nova Scotia does exist," Dr. Marike Finlay affirmed, pointing to a stack of more than 40 regional, national and international studies. "The science clearly shows harm to the ecosystem and existing industries in every other jurisdiction in the world where these farms are found, whether on our own Southwest Shore or in New Brunswick, BC, Scotland, Norway, Chile, the Faroe Islands, or Thailand. We should not imagine that somehow, magically, things will happen differently in other parts of Nova Scotia."

Dr. Inka Milewski, a veteran marine biologist based in New Brunswick, presented the results of a number of studies of the environmental impacts of open pen feedlots in New Brunswick, Maine, and Nova Scotia. "Many people are justifiably concerned about the pesticides and heavy metals and antibiotics that go into the water from an open pen operation," she commented. "But the most damage by far comes from the quantities of waste that these large feedlots discharge into the water. 1000 metric tons of fish will produce 200 metric tons of waste in a concentrated area. There is no speedy recovery from such damage."

Biologist, Dr. Susanna Fuller of the Atlantic Coalition for Aquaculture Reform and the Ecology Action Center agreed. "Nova Scotia is the only place in the world where a remaining and very valuable lobster fishery is competing for the same turf as these open pen sites. It doesn't make economic sense to risk damaging at least two billion dollar industries--lobster fishing and tourism--for the sake of high risk, highly subsidized, low employment enterprises like these feedlots."

Retired fireman and lifelong local fisherman and hunter Bill Williams reports that he has been combing through federal and provincial guidelines that are supposed to regulate the placement of open pen feedlots. "The provincial government and members of the aquaculture industry sat down together and developed a set of guidelines for themselves in 2009—the "Roadmap for Aquaculture Investment in Nova Scotia."

“They’re not following even one of their own recommendations. The water isn’t deep enough where they want to put pens; they’re using LaHave River data for the Eastern Shore; they’re proposing sites within less than a kilometer of parks and wildlife areas; they’re too close to or on top of lobster spawning grounds; in one case the pens look like they’re going in the middle of a narrow navigational channel, and local residents, fishermen and business owners are united against this. I just don’t see where these operators and the NDP government think this aquaculture business is going to work here.”

The Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore (APES), which sponsored the community forum, continues to call for a moratorium on open pen finfish aquaculture.

“Minister Belliveau refused this call from us and the members of more than 50 other organizations last week,” resident Dr. Karin Cope commented. “But the provincial government has done nothing to reassure us that, as Minister Belliveau likes to say, ‘the process’ will prevent harms from happening. We urge him and the provincial NDP to listen to their constituents, and not just the industry on this file.”

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Some images of the forum are also available upon request.