

Scottish firm withdraws salmon application

Snow Island Salmon Inc. is the second multinational salmon farming corporation to withdraw a large lease application in Nova Scotia this year.

The Scottish-owned firm advised the province the company is withdrawing its salmon farm lease in Beaver Harbour on the Eastern Shore, according to a news release from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

The lease is one of three 18-hectare sites in HRM previously applied for by the subsidiary of Loch Duart, a Scottish-based salmon producer. The others are Shoal Bay and Spry Bay.

"Environmental and economic development concerns are being carefully considered," for the other applications said Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister Sterling Belliveau.

The Beaver Harbour application is being withdrawn by Snow Island based on its proximity to wild salmon populations, according to the release.

Shane Borthwick, vice-president operations, Snow Island, said about the withdrawal, "Snow Island, in conjunction with government, conservation groups and the scientific community, is working to further understand wild salmon migration routes along the Eastern Shore."

\$700,000 wild salmon investment protected

Sue Scott, spokesperson for the Atlantic Salmon Federation, told SCT that ASF appreciates the leadership by the company to withdraw this application and its stated recognition of the potential adverse impacts of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon.

"We hope that government takes note and puts on hold all expansion until the impacts of salmon aquaculture on the environment are fully understood, consultation with stakeholders and communities take place, and all salmon farming is environmentally-responsible," said Scott.

The Beaver Harbour site apparently threatened the efforts of the Nova Scotia Salmon Association and ASF on West River Sheet Harbour where an intensive migration program to counteract the effects of acid rain is underway. Since 2005, Scott told SCT, non-profit groups have spent more than \$700,000 to restore pH values of West River Sheet Harbour to the very acceptable range of between 5.5 and 6.0. "The river now supports a much increased Atlantic salmon smolt run," she added.

A public meeting in February in the area resulted in strong opposition to the large salmon farms, which have been controversial in other Nova Scotia communities, including St. Mary's Bay, Port Mouton and Shelburne.

Beaver Harbour a bargaining chip?

"This news does not surprise us," said president of the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore (APES), Marike Finlay. "We have always believed that the company was planning a three bay management scheme and that Beaver Harbour was a bargaining chip."

Sources in the area tell SCT they believe that Loch Duart may be considering pulling out of Snow Island Salmon altogether. This is due, say sources, "to the huge disease outbreak on his farms in Scotland and perhaps the fierce resistance to his company here in the area."

"The Eastern Shore still must deal with the extant salmon feedlot at Owl's Head," adds Findlay. "Now housing approximately 25-18 pens, including the proposed sites of Shoal Bay and Spry Harbour.

"Because these three bays are in HRM," she adds, "it is very important for the citizens of Halifax to weigh in on whether or not they want these polluting open pen salmon feedlots on their shores and in their bays and harbours."

Findlay and APES contend that the wild salmon recovery, lobster fishery, tourism industry and in-settlement in the other two bays are all jeopardized by the expansion of an industry which allows "a Boeing 747 worth of fish excrement to settle on the sea floor for every cycle of 500,000 fish grown." Findlay insists that the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore will continue to call for a moratorium on all new leases in their coastal waters unless and until an independent inquiry can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that no harm will come to their environment, quality of life and extant industries.

"While Beaver Harbour is in fact the bay adjacent to my own home on West Quoddy Bay," Dr. Finlay continued, "I have every intention of continuing to serve as president of APES, which is a member of the Atlantic Coalition for Aquaculture Reform - ACAR."

That group is comprised of over 114 groups from across the province and earlier in 2012 called for a moratorium on open pen fin fish farming during a press conference in Halifax.

"That is still our position and we will work to make all Nova Scotians aware of the nefarious implications of open pen salmon feedlots upon their own health, their economy, the health of their environment, the health of their wild catch fishery, especially the lobster and wild salmon fishery," says Findlay.

She says that APES continues to urge the NDP government to consult with the entire community on the Eastern Shore and to grant them their request of developing closed containment on land fish farming which, she says, "is the way of the future because it does not contaminate the coastal waters and produces a non-toxic much sought after product."

"The eastern Shore wants to be on the cutting edge of future fish farming, not the host of a sunset industry like open pen salmon feedlots," she added. Findlay urged "all Nova Scotians" to watch the recent documentary [Salmon Wars](#), which is available free online. "Once Nova Scotians see this film they will understand why open pen salmon feedlots are bad for this province."

APES has an [online petition opposing the fish farms](#), which has generated more than 3000 signators.

Questionable science

Belliveau said in the news release that, "This government is committed to science-based decisions that strike the right balance between environmental concerns and allowing the industry to develop in a sustainable way." The issue of science has been a controversial one for Belliveau. His department has repeatedly refused to disclose what science they possess regarding the effects on habitat and other species and, in an interview in the documentary Salmon Wars, Belliveau admits that the science he continually refers to is held by federal agencies and has never been in the possession of his department. The Cohen Commission Report release Wednesday discussed the probable negative effect of salmon farms on the wild stocks and, among its 75 recommendations, urged that the government take a "precautionary approach" to protecting wild salmon.

Loch Duart promotes itself as a progressive company, selling "high quality salmon from the Highlands of Scotland."

The firm has not received a warm welcome in the community. In a letter to Loch Duart from the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore, officers of that group told the firm that "80-90% of the citizens of the Eastern Shore are against Loch Duart coming here."

Sustainable salmon scam?

"Many citizens have researched Loch Duart online and are aware of its terrible record," continued the letter. "They have learned that Loch Duart is in no way better than any other salmon farm although they always claim to be. They are among the companies with most extensive use of toxic chemicals in all of Scotland. It's also widely known that Loch Duart Ltd has an appalling track record on escapes. The people of the Eastern Shore do not want Loch Duart despoiling their pristine coastline, polluting their coastal waters and spoiling their sustainable fisheries and industries."

Aquaculture activist Don Staniford has referred to Loch Duart's "[sustainable salmon scam](#)" in blogs and internet postings. In the past weeks, there have been rumblings on the Eastern Shore that Loch Duart may be considering pulling out of the project.

The application withdrawal is the second of its kind this year. In February, Cooke Aquaculture withdrew a lease application for a massive, 1,000,000-million fish industrial salmon farm in the outer Shelburne Harbour after 700,000 fish at an adjoining site were slaughtered due to an infectious salmon anemia (ISA) outbreak there. The entire harbour was subsequently quarantined. Calls to Snow Island were not returned by press time.