

Scottish company plans N.S. fish farm

By [BRUCE ERSKINE Business Reporter](#)

Subsidiary applies for leases for Eastern Shore sites

Nick Joy wants to prove the farmed salmon naysayers wrong.

“I think it’s worth trying to do something different,” the managing director of Loch Duart Ltd., a Scottish aquaculture company, said in an interview from outside Inverness, Scotland, on Thursday.

Loch Duart, whose highly regarded salmon was served at the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, is making its first business foray outside Scotland into Nova Scotia.

A Canadian subsidiary, Snow Island Salmon Inc., has applied to the provincial government for finfish leases on three sites in Shoal Bay, Spry Bay and Beaver Harbour on the Eastern Shore.

Joy, who plans to attend an open house and public meeting at Branch 58 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Sheet Harbour on Feb. 6, said the development could accommodate up to 500,000 fish in 20 pens.

The plan has raised the hackles of a blog site called Save the Eastern Shore that argues that large-scale salmon farms threaten the marine environment.

“The expansion of open-pen finfish farms will pollute the water,” blogger and salmon flyfisher Stephen Drage said in an email.

“The threat of chemicals, sea lice, disease and escapes will upset the ecosystem, put the lobster fishery in danger and will wreak havoc on wild salmon.”

Drage is asking concerned citizens to write to the government about the expansion of open-pen salmon farms in Nova Scotia waters.

His concerns mirror those of residents and fishermen in Shelburne County who oppose an application by Cooke Aquaculture of New Brunswick to build open-pen farms in Jordan Bay, near Shelburne Harbour.

Critics of that plan, undergoing a federal environmental assessment, allege the farms and the potential use of pesticides to control sea lice threaten lucrative lobster fisheries.

Joy acknowledged there is a great deal of cynicism about salmon farming, but he said Loch Duart is committed to environmentally sensitive, small-scale aquaculture. “We try to farm in a different way. We’re not a multinational company.”

Loch Duart, the first salmon farm to meet Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals fish welfare and ISO 14001 environmental standards, rotates operations annually so that areas left fallow can regenerate themselves.

“We’re as close to wild as you can be,” Joy said, adding that the company has no interest in damaging wild fisheries or supplanting jobs.

“If we thought it would hurt lobster, we wouldn’t continue.”

Joy said Loch Duart was attracted to Nova Scotia because it is largely unfarmed and because there is a certain comfort level inherent in expanding from Old Scotland to New Scotland.

“It’s very easy to be in a room full of Canadians.”

Loch Duart, which won the Seafood Prix d’Elite award for best product line at the 2011 European Seafood Exposition in Brussels, expects to employ about 20 people in Nova Scotia if its plans are approved.

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