

Eastern Shore group wants fish farm ban

By [MICHAEL GORMAN](#) Truro Bureau

New association fears operation would be threat to lobster industry



Employees of a trout fish farm off Beach Meadows in Queens County work to repair damage after a storm destroyed the operation in November 2007. An Eastern Shore group is calling a fish farm ban in the region. (BEVERLEY WARE / South Shore Bureau)

Opponents of fish farms on the Eastern Shore say what is happening at a Shelburne farm is proof that there should be a moratorium on any more operating licences.

The Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore, a group including private citizens, members of the fishing and tourism industries, and environmental groups, was formed Friday in response to concerns about Snow Island Salmon Inc.'s application for three finfish leases for sites in Shoal Bay, Spry Bay and Beaver Harbour along the Eastern Shore.

Association spokeswoman Karin Cope said a lot of people in the area are worried about the proposal.

"They fear that this will threaten the lobster fishery, among other things," Cope said.
"Emotions are running pretty high here and it looks like opposition is running pretty high."

Adding to the group's concern is reports about a fish farm in Shelburne, where caged salmon are suspected of having infectious salmon anemia. Until it can be proved that this won't happen on the Eastern Shore, association members believe there should be a moratorium, said Cope.

"The province is suggesting that these farms are going to provide jobs in rural regions, and we're really concerned that actually the stable jobs that we do have in our communities are going to be killed by the farms."

Snow Island's parent company, Loch Duart Ltd. of Scotland, has been recognized for the quality of its salmon, as well as for the fact that it is the first salmon farm to meet standards for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and ISO 14001 environmental regulations.

But Cope said that doesn't put her group at ease.

"I don't think people are reassured."

The appearance of fish farm equipment near one of the proposed sites has some people worried that that could mean the application process for Snow Island is just a formality, said Cope.

"It was on site before the Feb. 6 (public) meeting."

Cope said there are also concerns about a lack of oversight, monitoring and reporting, general water quality and the potential impact of fecal matter on the lobster population.

"It's not beyond a reasonable doubt that there will not be damage to all sectors of our economy."

Jim Boudreau, NDP MLA for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, said he recognizes that there is a high amount of concern in his riding.

But Boudreau said he doesn't believe the proposal is being rubber-stamped. He believes the process will be followed properly and will examine all the issues. He has also seen the equipment along the shoreline but said it could be for an existing operation in the Owls Head area.

"They've been doing some experiments with the site, I believe."

Boudreau said he is sensitive to the criticism that not enough information is getting to the public. He is in the process of trying to arrange a meeting between area fisherman, the company and possibly the province.

"They really would like to sit down and have some of their questions answered," said Boudreau.

Given the value and importance of the lobster industry on the Eastern Shore, Boudreau said fishermen have a legitimate concern. As the son of a lobsterman, Boudreau said he is well aware of the importance of not compromising the ocean and fishing grounds.

"I don't want to see, and I will not support, any initiative that is going to negatively impact upon existing fish stocks. But, at the same time, I think it is important for us to realize that this industry does co-exist in the province and maybe we've got to really try to find ways and talk to one another and get the information we need so informed decisions are made."

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