

## **Eastern Shore residents to hear about fish farm proposal**

MLA Jim Boudreau says he's eager to learn more about three proposed fish farm sites on the Eastern Shore.

The NDP member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour was slated to attend a public information meeting Monday evening in Sheet Harbour to discuss a proposed farmed salmon operation.

"I'm going over there to listen and as the MLA to ensure that people have the opportunity to ask questions and that people have the opportunity to have their questions answered," Boudreau said in a phone interview earlier Monday.

The meeting was being hosted by the provincial Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, which is ultimately responsible to approve or reject the Snow Island Salmon Inc. project.

The Canadian subsidiary of Scottish aquaculture company Loch Duart Ltd. has applied for finfish leases on sites in Shoal Bay, Spry Bay and Beaver Harbour.

Representatives from the province, as well as a number of federal departments, were scheduled to discuss the process, said Fisheries and Aquaculture spokesman Brett Loney.

"Information is gathered from a variety of departments and agencies and that information is provided to the minister to make his final decision on whether we approve the licences and leases for those three sites," Loney said. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Transport Canada and Environment Canada are all involved in researching the proposal.

As well, the province is looking for public input.

Officials were hoping to hear from residents at the Monday meeting, Loney said.

Nick Joy, the managing director of Loch Duart Ltd., has said he would be attending the session, according to a news release.

Loch Duart hopes to produce up to 2,500 tonnes of salmon by 2013. As well, Snow Island will be looking for a local company to process the fish.

"Economically, any jobs that we can (attract) to the Eastern Shore are much-needed jobs, that's for sure," Boudreau said.

The fishery and tourism industries are important to the area, Boudreau said.

The Eastern Shore already has shellfish operations, but this would be the first finfish farm, he said.

German property owners in West Quoddy warn that the aquaculture operation could ruin the Eastern Shore for European tourists.

“We know for sure that this would discourage European tourists from coming to this area, which is popular among sea-kayaking tourists, sports fishermen and nature lovers,” wrote Karen Elfendahl-Taetz and Frank Taetz in a letter to The Chronicle Herald.

“The Eastern Shore is advertised as an area of sustainable tourism. How will algae blooms, marine mammal deaths and waste deposits on the ocean floor, caused by open-net salmon farming, fit into this picture?”

The province will be looking at each proposed site individually and a decision could take between two and six months or longer, Loney said.

“We try to balance having an aquaculture industry that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. That’s why we go through a process to gather the information to determine whether these are the appropriate sites and locations,” Loney said.

Although the province would prefer to hear from the public within the next month, Loney said the department will welcome public input right up to the time the minister delivers his decision.

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