



Ecology Action Centre



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## **Approval of Salmon Aquaculture Lease Spurs Outrage from Community and Conservation Groups**

Halifax, NS \_ Despite much opposition, the NDP government has given the go-ahead for an industrial-sized salmon aquaculture project in St. Mary's Bay. This decision was released on June 8<sup>th</sup>, which was World Oceans Day.

A petition circulated throughout Brier Island and Long Island in spring of 2010 received over 400 signatures opposing the sites. The signatures represent approximately 83% of the total population of these islands, and include all of the lobster fishermen on the islands. LFA 34 sent a separate letter opposing these sites, and over 100 letters were submitted requesting that the scope of the proposal encompass more environmental and community concerns.

The known environmental impact associated with open net-pen salmon aquaculture, and the unknown risk related to such a large-scale endeavor has raised concern throughout the communities and within conservation organizations. The proposed sites have the potential to negatively affect the lobster fishery in one of the most productive and lucrative lobster fishing areas in the world, and may spread disease and parasites to already endangered wild Atlantic salmon population.

"The Minister has refused to discuss this project on multiple occasions," says Karen Crocker of the St. Mary's Bay Coastal Alliance (SMBCA). "He indicated he would only listen to our concerns and then address them when the federal process was finished. Transport Canada completed their process May 27<sup>th</sup>, and a week-and-a-half later the Provincial Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environment, Sterling Belliveau released his decision to approve the sites, despite not having fulfilled his promise to follow-up with the concerns of the community."

Citizens from coastal communities are growing increasingly frustrated as they feel they are being ignored by their elected officials. Numerous requests for follow-up meetings have been met with silence and communities have not been engaged in meaningful dialogue.

"Salmon feedlots are expanding in Nova Scotia because disease and environmental problems have limited such opportunities in New Brunswick," says Matt Abbott, Fundy Baykeeper, based in New Brunswick. "If Nova Scotians value their coastal environments and traditional fisheries, they need to act now to prevent aquaculture of this scale in their bays."

"The approval of leases, in the absence of any policy framework and without consideration of truly sustainable economic development, flies in the face of all the intentions of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act," says Jordan Nikoloyuk, Sustainable Fisheries Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre. "By embracing open-net feedlot aquaculture, Nova Scotia is placing itself in the backwater, once again – and this is

unfortunate, as it will limit our access to sustainable seafood markets, which are growing globally.”

In October 2010, fifteen organizations, including conservation organization, fishing associations and community groups, joined together to form the Atlantic Coalition for Aquaculture Reform (ACAR), calling for aquaculture reforms that respect the coastal environment and the people who live there.

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