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Friends of Shelburne Harbour – Mayday Shelburne County - St. Mary's Bay Coastal Alliance

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CANADIAN GOVERNMENT MUST PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DEADLY SALMON VIRUS

Insist on adherence to DFO guidelines and postpone Jordan Bay stocking

Shelburne, NS - In the wake of four recent major outbreaks of the deadly infectious salmon anemia (ISA) in Atlantic waters surrounding Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has determined recently that it cannot eradicate the disease. (See below)

“The Canadian and provincial governments must immediately put in place programs and policies which will prevent yet more serious outbreaks of this pernicious disease,” says Karen Crocker, spokesperson for the St. Mary's Bay Coastal Alliance.

ISA, though presented by CFIA not to be an immediate danger to human populations, has shown to create 90% mortality in Atlantic salmon and can also infect cod, herring and brown trout.

Outbreaks in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in 2012 and 2013 resulted in CFIA ordering the slaughter of more than one million salmon. The large, multi-national operators of the salmon farms were paid compensation from the federal government of \$30 million or more.

Marine biologist Alexandra Morton, who testified about ISA to the Cohen Commission and was the 2012 Ransome Myers lecturer at Dalhousie University, said on Monday that there is the possibility of a large epidemic of ISA breaking out in the Maritimes, perhaps as devastating as that which struck Chile in 2007. She reports that the four most recent outbreaks involve previously unknown versions of the virus.

“The pattern is always the same. At first the virus appears controllable, and the industry, wanting to make as much money as possible before it goes deadly, ignores the power of this influenza-type virus and they allow it to mutate into a deadly strain,” Morton says. “Then it rips through the industry killing their fish.”

In the most recent outbreak, New Brunswick-based Cooke Aquaculture announced that it would be selling two million pounds of its ISA contaminated salmon on the consumer market. Sobeys stores has said that would not be selling ISA salmon but Loblaws has been non-committal on the subject.

The most effective short-term method for ISA prevention in open pen net salmon farms is adherence to strict siting guidelines for cages which can hold up to 120,000 fish and are often grouped with more than one million fish on one farm.

In fact, says Herschel Specter, co-founder of Friends of Shelburne Harbour, there is bio-security siting guidance from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). This DFO siting guidance calls for a minimum spacing of three kilometers between salmon feedlot sites. "The problem," says Specter, "their guidelines are constantly ignored. They were ignored in St. Mary's Bay and they have been ignored in Jordan Bay." If this preventative guidance were implemented, says Specter, it would have a profound impact on the farmed salmon industry in Nova Scotia and elsewhere.

Even though the published DFO guidelines stipulate a distance between sites of three kilometers, the two operating salmon feedlot sites in St. Marys Bay are only 1.2 kilometers apart. The two recently approved sites of Jordan Bay and Blue Island in Shelburne County, Nova Scotia are 1.6 kilometers apart, well below the guideline distance. One Jordan Bay site is just slightly more than three kilometers from the ISA-infected site at McNutts Island.

Three salmon feedlot sites in Shelburne's inner harbour are crowded together with the Hartz Point site only one kilometer away from the Sandy Point site and about half a kilometer from the Boston Rock site.

"We expect that DFO and the province will now take swift action in what looks to be a major growing problem with ISA," says Sindy Horncastle, spokesperson with Mayday Shelburne County. The group has been rebuffed several times in the past year by the refusal of Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister Sterling Belliveau to provide any scientific support for his decisions about siting of the fish farms in Jordan Bay.

"Our position has always been that Jordan Bay is too sensitive an area to have open net salmon farms," added Horncastle, "the government has simply set themselves up for another failure by ignoring their own siting guidelines, making it easier for disease to spread."

Local citizens complained years ago to the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NSDFA) about the dangers of overcrowding, but were ignored. With ISA outbreaks in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Labrador and other locations around the world and with the CFIA stressing prevention, citizen groups are insistent that NSDFA finally take positive action.

More than 100 organizations recently appealed to Nova Scotia premier Darrell Dexter for a moratorium on salmon farm development until the disease and other health issues could be addressed. As a minimum, say some of the groups, the Nova Scotia

government should suspend the initial stocking of the Jordan Bay site scheduled for this spring until comprehensive bio-security regulations are put in place.

CBC News Report re: CFIA

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2013/01/28/nb-infectious-salmon-anemia-prevention-730.html>

From Alexandra Morton:

Ominously, the last four ISA virus reports made by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to the Office of International Epizootics (OIE) describe the virus found in the farm salmon as new strain never seen before.

09/02/2012 - Southern Nova Scotia - "Similar to HPR6 with an additional 4 amino acids missing (Sequencing of segment 6 was performed - pending) Emergency harvest, official destruction / disposal" virus isolation reverse transcription PCR positive

19/06/2012 - Newfoundland - "The strain of ISAV has not been reported in the Atlantic region before; it is believed to be a result of contact with infected wild species" entire farm depopulated, did not affect other feedlots in the area, no reporting on the name of this strain. Concurrent with BKD.

12/06/2012 - Nova Scotia Partial sequence of segment 6: HPR not classified; North American this strain has not been previously identified in the Atlantic region - emergency harvest, disinfection of infected premises - concurrent with BKD

26/11/2012 - Newfoundland - "The identified strain have not been reported before. The population is infected with at least 2 strains of ISAV (non-HPR0) one is most similar to HPR6, the other does not demonstrate any particulate similarity to any previously described HPR type" Both considered North American, hypothesized it came from wild finfish. Vaccinated against ISA, 3.8 kg concurrent with BKD and lice infestation.

Link to these reports:

http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Countryinformation/Countryreports

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