

# The Aquaculture Project



## Summary

Various Maritime citizens and citizen groups – mainly, but not exclusively, wildlife organizations and individual sports fishers -- are concerned at the rapid expansion of net-cage salmon aquaculture in the Atlantic Provinces, and in particular in Nova Scotia. A small ad-hoc committee has been raising funds to create, distribute and promote educational audio, video and text materials examining the economic, environmental and social implications of this expansion, including both its benefits and its potential costs and risks. The group has reached an agreement with Paper Tiger Enterprises, creators of The Green Interview, to create these materials, and it has also arranged for the initiative to be administered by the Ecology Action Centre, which is able to issue income tax receipts to donors.

## Background

Support for this initiative flows mainly from a number of organizations concerned about the conservation of wild fish and the ecology of inshore waters generally. Other interested parties include tourism operators, outfitters, lobster fishermen, processors, environmentalists and cottagers. All are concerned that governments seem to be giving undue weight to aquaculture's promise of economic activity and job creation, overlooking the potential losses of jobs and profits that currently exist, not to mention the less easily-quantified benefits of an unspoiled natural environment.

The economic equation, for instance, is of particularly intense concern for lobster fishermen, whose traditional fishing grounds have in some cases been arbitrarily licensed to aquaculture companies without consultation or compensation for the people whose current jobs rely on that fishery. By the same token, sport fishing represents an economic activity of considerable importance in this region. For instance, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' 2005 Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada showed that Nova Scotia's Inverness County benefited by \$2.5 million annually, directly attributable to Atlantic salmon sport fishing. However, in other areas the decline of wild salmon populations has already damaged that sector severely. The St. Mary's River in Nova Scotia, for instance, once supported 50 jobs in sport fishing, and now supports none.

Supporters of this project are not opposed to aquaculture per se; they recognize that it has a role in feeding a hungry world. They do question, however, whether net-cage salmon aquaculture in the open sea is a sustainable and environmentally responsible business, and whether its full costs have been taken into account in the licensing and oversight activities of governments. Accordingly, they feel the need for informational materials that will explore all these dimensions of the issue.

Specifically, they are asking the producers to interview experts and participants on the Pacific coast as well as the Atlantic. They want the project to include the best scientists in the field, and they want to learn about the regulatory regimes in jurisdictions such as British Columbia, Washington and Maine. The producers have been asked to pay attention to innovations and best practices elsewhere. The project's supporters want to find ways for aquaculture to flourish along with wild fish, molluscs and crustaceans and with all the people who, in their own ways and for their own purposes, use and love our coasts.

## Deliverables

- **a video documentary of 52 minutes in length** (a “television hour”) designed to be posted on web sites, distributed on DVDs and shown to community audiences either in meetings or on community cable. The show will be released under a Creative Commons license, which will allow it to be freely shown or viewed by anyone, anywhere, at no cost, provided that it is shown in its entirety and that proper acknowledgements are made.
- **DVDs of the show in any quantity desired**, provided to the sponsoring organization or its designates at cost.
- **distribution of the show to community cable channels** across the region, if desired;
- **full-length feature interviews on The Green Interview website** with **Alexandra Morton**, the BC warrior-scientist who first demonstrated many of the adverse effects of net-cage farms; **Alanna Mitchell**, author of *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*; and **Dr. Daniel Pauly** of the University of BC, a world authority on fisheries collapses. These interviews have already been done.
- **a Green Interview Special Presentation on Oceans and Aquaculture**, like the Special Presentation on Bhutan and the Pursuit of Gross National Happiness, that would include the feature interviews, the documentary, and ancillary written material. Because The Green Interview is now available in 15,000 libraries worldwide through its partnership with Gale Cengage Learning, the Special Presentation will become an important educational resource.
- **a shorter video documentary of 22 minutes in length** designed specifically for broadcast use as a half-hour TV show, to be placed if possible with a major broadcaster. Since this show is to be licensed to broadcasters, it cannot be released under Creative Commons.
- **a feature-length magazine article**, also to be released under a Creative Commons license. We will attempt to place this initially with a national magazine or newspaper.
- **A promotional strategy** that encompasses the promotion and distribution of all these components, and extends to web sites, blogs, computer discussion groups and similar venues.

Other opportunities will undoubtedly arise – for instance, we expect the show will appeal to many environmental web sites, national and regional broadcasters and specialty channels that we can't now predict, perhaps including outlets in Scotland, Ireland, Norway and other countries.

Preliminary work on the project began in September, 2011. The feature interviews are already completed, as are the visits to two best-practice sites on the west coast and some of the interviewing on the east coast. The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2012. To make a tax-deductible donation – large or small – in support of the project, please contact Henry Hicks at (902)678-8074, [hhicks@xcountry.tv](mailto:hhicks@xcountry.tv) Or fill in the form below and mail it with your cheque to “Salmon Project,” c/o Susanna Fuller, Ecology Action Centre, 2705 Fern Lane, Halifax NS, B3K 4L3.

**Yes! I'd like to support this salmon aquaculture video project.** Here's my cheque for \$\_\_\_\_ made out to “Ecology Action Centre!”

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_