



PRESS RELEASE - MAY 25, 2020

Healthy Bays Network forms to fight open-net finfish farms

(Halifax) - After months of hard work by dedicated volunteers, community meetings, lawn signs, presentations, rallies, municipal and political endorsements, and extensive media coverage, finally April 9th, 2020, the four Nova Scotian communities at the heart of the battle thought they'd won the day. Cermaq called it quits.

The multinational aquaculture corporation Cermaq, which over a year ago had responded to an invite from the province's government, suddenly abandoned their plan to put hundreds of open net pens in Nova Scotian waters. They blamed our shallow waters and poor flush rates. Twin Bays Coalition's Syd Dumaresq suggests there may have been another reason for their departure. "Nova Scotians rose up and denied them social license." For a few hours, it seemed like Nova Scotia might join BC and other jurisdictions worldwide by getting the net pens out of the water. Then New Brunswick seafood giant, the \$2.5B 'family-owned corporation' Cooke Aquaculture, announced its plan to fill the gap. Gwen Wilson of anti-net pen group the St. Mary's Bay Protectors observed, "Now, instead of opposing a foreign company, we faced one from New Brunswick bolstered by tremendous support from our own government." The communities' fight was clearly not over.

Says Protect Liverpool Bays' Brian Muldoon, "The companies are simply responding to the government's open-door-for-open-pens policy, that and our porous and permissive regulatory regime." Within days the province's Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture granted Cooke a 20-year lease and a 10-year license on the 14 pens they now operate in Liverpool Bay, and are about to entertain an application to expand to 60 pens. Cooke intends to grow 2 million salmon in Liverpool Bay. On St. Margaret's Bay they have applied to quadruple their Bayswater operation. In a pitch to Halifax's Chamber of Commerce in March, company CEO Glenn Cooke declared their aim is to produce 30 million pounds of fish annually in Nova Scotia, a threefold increase from current production rates.

Wendy Watson Smith of the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore has been fighting finfish farms since 2012. She says "The regulations have been written for industry. The voice of Nova Scotians needs to be heard."

Those voices are about to get a whole lot louder. Groups provincewide opposed to open net pens have now joined forces. They have formed the Healthy Bays Network (HBN). The St. Mary's Bay Protectors, Protect Liverpool Bay, the Twin Bays Coalition representing Mahone and St. Margaret's Bays, the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore, with support from the Ecology Action Centre, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and the Nova Scotia Salmon Association - an expanding network of groups from across the province - has formed an alliance.

By pooling resources, the **Healthy Bays Network** will organize impacted communities, alert Nova Scotians to the effects of open net-pens, the shortcomings of our regulatory regime, and present realizable options for sustainable aquaculture. Committed to a healthy environment, empowered communities, local employment and well-paying jobs with a future, Nova Scotians will hear lots more from the Healthy Bays Network in the weeks and months ahead.

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