



Industries highlight green efforts Environment Gulf of Maine Council hears from seaweed harvester and salmon growers association

Chuck Brown

Telegraph-Journal

Published Thursday June 14th, 2007

Appeared on page C10

Representatives of two industries that have been scrutinized and criticized by environmentalists appeared before the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment in St. Andrews on Wednesday.

Raul Ugarte, senior scientist with the seaweed harvester Acadian Seaplants, and Jamey Smith, executive director of the New Brunswick Salmon Growers' Association, told the council about their industries' commitments to sustainable operations.

"This is a very rich and almost pristine ecosystem for us and it's vital to keep it that way," Ugarte told a panel on sustainable development.

Acadian Seaplants operates in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia harvesting rockweed from the coastal waters. The seaweed, considered vital habitat for sea life, is processed for human consumption, fertilizer and for use in beauty products.

Ugarte told the council his company is meticulous in its research and harvesting methods to ensure the seaweed regenerates and that supplies are plentiful.

"It's very sustainable," he said, telling the council his workers can harvest an area in June and by September it has grown back.

The Gulf of Maine Council was established in 1989 by governors and premiers from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Its mission is to maintain and enhance environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine and to allow for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations.

In New Brunswick, salmon farming has been an economic giant and an environmental target. Smith told the council the industry, which employs about 4,500 people, has taken strides to become healthier and more productive while also improving its environmental record. He said a new management system is now being enacted that will make the fish and the environment healthier while the industry is also developing codes of practice aimed at decreasing the environmental impact of the business while also minimizing the risk of farmed fish escaping into the wild.

"We feel that our industry is positioned for growth," Smith said.

The Gulf of Maine Council's meetings in St. Andrews also included the presentation of Visionary Awards to Dipper Harbour fisherman Greg Thompson and to the community action group Friends of the Musquash.

Visionary Awards recognize innovation, creativity, and commitment to protecting the marine environment of the Gulf of Maine.

Thompson is the president of the Fundy North Fishermen's Association and was instrumental in the development of community-based fisheries management, which started in the mid-1990s. He is currently active in a project to develop a marine planning process for southwest New Brunswick.

Members of Friends of the Musquash are being recognized for their efforts in having the Musquash Estuary nationally designated as the first Marine Protected Area in New Brunswick earlier this year.