

Maintain balance between fishery, farming

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Commentary

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Aquaculture is a thriving, multi-million dollar industry in New Brunswick. Salmon farming in the Bay of Fundy is healthy and sustainable, providing thousands of skilled jobs that keep our best young workers in the province. It does - and must - productively co-exist with the commercial fishery and other users of our marine resource.

The New Brunswick Salmon Growers Association (NBSGA) and its members believe strongly that maintaining this balance is key to ensuring the future of the Bay of Fundy.

Salmon farmers in the Bay of Fundy are leaders in environmental stewardship and adhere to strict guidelines regarding where sites are placed and how they are operated. This ensures that farms do not negatively affect the production of the commercial fishery. This was demonstrated through recent reports that show the herring catch last year was the highest in recent memory.

There is tremendous space available for both commercial fishery and aquaculture to complementarily co-exist. Today, the total area leased to salmon farmers is less than 2,000 hectares and the actual space occupied by the farms is less than half of that. The area occupied by salmon farms is a small fraction of the Bay of Fundy in southwest New Brunswick. Commercial fishers regularly set gear in and around salmon farming sites. The government has set aside large areas where no aquaculture can take place, yet the commercial fishery is given full access.

Salmon farms in the Bay of Fundy are regulated and operated according to a world-leading Bay Management Area (BMA) system. This system is based on scientific research and monitoring and adheres to high standards of environmental quality and fish health and welfare. Each year, one third of all sites are left fallow - a basic farming principle that is required to ensure this system works. It should also be noted that there has been extensive research into the potential interactions of salmon farms and the commercial fishery that has been incorporated into the BMA system and the process of selecting sites.

The development of new farm sites will be accomplished according to the BMA system and all provincial and federal requirements, and in consultation with other marine resource users. Development of new farms, together with flexibility in operation of existing sites, is required to ensure environmental and financial sustainability.

Salmon farming is important to New Brunswick. Aquaculture has been identified as a key component to the province's self-sufficiency goals, and rightly so.

We continue to find ways to progress our industry and build upon the high standards of environmental stewardship set by generations of salmon farmers. We will continue to work collaboratively with the governments of New Brunswick and Canada and our colleagues in the fishery to ensure the balance of our two industries and the protection and care of the Bay of Fundy for years to come.

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