

Gulf of Maine hears from industry representatives

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ST. ANDREWS - The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment have heard from four industry representatives who spoke about some of the good work they are doing to become more sustainable and keep the gulf a sustainable place.

Moderator Justin Huston, coastal zone advisor with the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, said the council is really trying to place an emphasis over the next five years on working with industry so they had invited a cross section of some of the major industries, which take place in the gulf.

They were Dr. Raul Ugarte, senior scientist with Acadian Seaplants Ltd, Dr. Jamey Smith, executive director of the New Brunswick Salmon Growers Association (NBSGA), Caroline Gravel, director of environmental affairs with the Shipping Federation of Canada, and John MacDonald, vice-president energy delivery and generation with the Public Service of New Hampshire.

Ugarte said Acadian Seaplants is a fully integrated company processing both wild and cultivated seaweed and has been in operation for 23 years with over 310 employees and 300 harvesters.

The seaweed is used for food, fertilizer and in beauty products.

He said about 60 per cent of their raw material comes from the Bay of Fundy and most of their products are organically certified. The most important raw material they have is rockweed, said Ugarte, and, due to the commitment they have in the market, it is very important they have a consistent supply.

They manage the resource so that it will continue to be there for years to come, he said. Ugarte added they only harvest the canopy so what is taken in June has grown back again by September.

"We need a pristine area because our products are certified organic and we have a competitive edge in the market because of that. We can guarantee our customers we will have the same product year after year, he said."

Smith said aquaculture is a very important part of the economy in southwest New Brunswick providing 4,500 jobs in this area. Following a crisis in 2005 due to several factors including the high Canadian dollar and ISA (infectious salmon anemia) he said they have done some restructuring and have moved from a pro-



The Friends of Musquash were presented with a Gulf of Maine Council Visionary Award for their efforts in having the Musquash estuary nationally designated as the first marine protected area in New Brunswick. Pictured (from left to right) are David Thompson, Marie Tremblay, Anne Riley, Roy Gallop, Mabel Fitzrandolph, Wendall McAllister and Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Aquaculture Byron James.

duction driven to a market driven industry.

He said they now have a system of six single year class major bay management areas and two smaller ones. Last year, said Smith, over a third of the sites were left empty- 200,000 to 250,000 - which was a significant drop in production, but the industry realized this was necessary for their survival.

They are also moving towards an environmental performance based regulation system, said Smith, and fish health is an extremely high priority for them. He said they are working on environmental codes of practice and are about to roll out a code of containment, which will provide guidelines to farmers to minimize breaches of confinement. NBSGA is working very closely with the Atlantic Salmon Federation on these programs, he said.

"We have put things in place that will allow us to grow sustainably. We produce a wonderful product that continues to get a premium in the market place. It is very important that we continue that."

Smith said world production of farmed salmon is down right now so prices are very high so farmers are selling every fish they can get on the market and they often have orders filled two months ahead.

Gravel said the Shipping Federation of Canada represents owners, operators and agents of ocean ships and described them as the greenest mode of transporta-

tion. She said they are not systemic polluters but environmental issues are gradually increasing so they have developed their own environmental policy.

She said they have emphasized the importance of environmental issues to their members and developed a data base of environmental programs undertaken by the marine industry. They are also promoting best practices, said Gravel.

Environmental issues they are currently working on, she said, are ballast water and aquatic invasive species, ship strikes and noise, shore erosion, garbage, wastewater, dredging, water levels, anti-fouling and spills.

Gravel said environmental issues related to commercial navigation are becoming increasingly prominent and cited the changing of the shipping lanes due to the right whales.

"Why I am here today is basically that when our ships are part of a problem we want to know about it so we can become part of the solution."

The Gulf of Maine Council was established in 1989 by the governors and premiers of the five states and provinces that border the gulf - New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire - as a regional entity with a mission "to maintain and enhance environmental quality on the Gulf of Maine and to allow for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations."