

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

Fishing on the Brink: inshore fishery threatened

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

Directed by Chuck Lapp and Bill McKiggan

Envision Productions Limited

On November 13, 15 inshore fishermen from the South Shore of Nova Scotia will be appearing in court. They are expected to begin a constitutional challenge for their ancient priority right of access to the inshore fishing grounds on the East Coast of Canada.

Fishing on the Brink, a documentary film produced by Envision Productions of Halifax, outlines their two-year struggle for these rights.

The film begins with six fishermen, members of the South Western Fisherman's Rights Association, occupying the Barrington Passage Department of Fisheries Office (DFO) in 1996. The fishermen were protesting what they considered the government's "selling-out" of their fishery.

The South Shore has supported an inshore fishery for over 250 years. The fishermen use traditional hook and line methods and only the highest quality fish are kept, ensuring a sustainable fishery.

Ronnie Wilkins is the President of the South West Fishermen's Rights Association, and was among the fishermen featured in the documentary.

"We're in trouble," said Wilkins in the film. "The fish stocks aren't in trouble — we're in trouble."

But are the fish stocks really safe? The government is looking to replace the inshore fishermen with the same corporate dragger fleets which are known to have devastated ground fish stocks and lead to the closure of the fishery.

The proposed introduction of Individual Transferrable Quotas (ITQs) allocates a specific quota of fish to each boat. This quota can be sold, leased or bought before it is even caught, which looks good because it gives every licence value. The fishermen argue, however, that not enough fish are being allocated to small boats for them to make a living, forcing them to sell out to larger companies.

The ITQ system has also been criticized from a conservation standpoint. Previously, a boat could catch an almost unlimited number of fish, so long as they caught it before the quota for the region was reached. If ITQs are adopted, each boat will have their own individual quota. To increase their profits, fishermen will have to increase the size of the fish they are catching — the bigger the fish, the more it is worth per pound — by throwing the small ones back. Once caught, these fish have little chance of

surviving.

Another anticipated problem is that the South Shore would be implementing multi-species ITQs for cod, haddock and pollack. Once a fisherman reached his quota for one of these species, he would have to stop fishing. To get around this, if a fisherman was very close to his quota for cod but far from the quotas for the other two species, he could throw out his surplus of cod to continue fishing.

"What this means ultimately," said Dr. Jeff Hutchings, a Fisheries Biologist at Dalhousie University, "is fish [are] being caught but [they are] not being recorded as being caught. What's ultimately happening is more fish are dying."

The use of ITQs in Norway, Iceland and New Zealand have shown that fish stocks declined

more rapidly after the system was implemented.

"We don't want to take that last

fish out of the ocean, we just want to make an honest, sensible living," says fisherman Tom Hatfeild in the documentary.

Fisherman Fred Sears insists throughout *Fishing on the Brink*, that the issue is not only relevant to the fisherman but to Canadians at large.

"Privatisation of this fishery is not going to be owned by Canadians," says Sears. "There's no investors in Canada [who] are going to come up with enough money to buy this fishery out. It's going to come from outside of Canada — it's going to be foreign investment."

Fishing on the Brink will be broadcast Tuesday, November 11, at 9:30pm on VISION TV.



Fred Sears an inshore fisherman hugs fellow occupier, Paulette Deviller after the fishermen ended their 25-day occupation of the Barrington Passage Fisheries Office. Photo by Tima Comeau - Yarmouth Vanguard

NS receives Gold Leaf recognition

BY MARK REYNOLDS

The Nova Scotia government has received a pat on the back from a national ecological group for its Protected Areas strategy. The Canadian Council on Ecological Areas has awarded the province a Gold Leaf for the strategy which has seen 31 geographic areas declared off-limits to development.

The Protected Areas plan has received a lot of attention in recent weeks, with the governments decision to re-instate the Jim Campbell's Barren in Cape Breton as a protected area. The barren had been removed from the list to allow

gold mining exploration in the area.

The Canadian Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA) is a non-profit organization made up of government agencies, environmental groups, private industry and research organizations.

The award was presented to Dale Smith, manager of Parks Planning for the Department of Natural Resources.

Smith said that the award was "very gratifying."

The CCEA award recognizes the governments overall Protected Areas strategy. Conceived in 1994, the strategy has undergone a review

process but has yet to be ratified in the provincial legislature.

Though the government has been criticized for removing the barren from the list, Smith noted de-listing an area would be very difficult to do once the strategy is passed in the legislature.

"They can be designated, so they can be un-designated... but they would be [un-designated] with substantial public pressure," said Smith. "[Protection] gives a higher level of management."

Martin Willison, an ecology professor at Dalhousie feels that the award was a fitting tribute to the

province's efforts in this area.

"I think it was well deserved," said Willison "the quality of planning was very good."

Willison pointed out that though the department was working with a very small staff, they managed to set aside nearly five per cent of the province's land area to be protected.

Willison was highly critical of the decision to remove, then re-instate the barren.

"The decision to take it out was a bungle," said Willison. "The decision to put it back on wasn't related to systematic planning, it was politics."

MacLellan announces protection of barren

continued from page 1...

de-listing of the protected area last November.

The RCMP are examining whether official documents were illegally altered and if cabinet leaked important information to individuals who profited from the removal of the barren from a list of protected areas.

The Ontario Securities Commission will also continue to investigate Regal Goldfields for allegations of insider trading. Regal's stock soared last year after the barren was removed from a list of protected areas on November 21, but before the decision was made public on December 3.

Legislation will be introduced this fall to formally designate the Jim Campbell's Barren, and 30 other natural spaces in the province, as protected.

Colin Stewart of the World Wildlife Fund welcomed the Premier's decision.

"We are very encouraged by the tone of the whole announcement," he said.

The World Wildlife Fund dropped Nova Scotia's grade in the *Endangered Spaces Progress*

Report last year from an "A" to a "C-", partially in response to the government's previous decision not to protect the barren.

Stewart says that last week's decision to reinstate the barren goes well beyond the protection of a tiny piece of wilderness in Northern Cape Breton. He suggests that the coalition of environmental groups

that banded together to protect the barren will continue to be a force to be reckoned with in the future.

"It is clear that most of these groups, and their key people, will keep in touch, and will continue to follow these [conservation] issues," Stewart said.

It appears that the coalition has its work cut out. Mining licenses

have recently been issued to an exploration company, CAG Enterprises Ltd., allowing them to explore for clay minerals within a candidate protected area in southwestern Nova Scotia. Exploratory drilling within the Shelburne Barrens Nature Reserve is expected to begin sometime this week.

Website makes order from chaos

BY KIMBERLY MCCALL

It has always been difficult to find comprehensive scientific information on the Web, but it has become a lot easier since the introduction of *SciCentral*.

This Internet site located at www.scicentral.com contains links to the most recent and accurate information on the web. Before any of the over 1,000 sites can be linked to this page it is "screened for accuracy, frequent maintenance, and completeness", says Dr. Robert Uffen, the creator of the site.

Beyond having links to other sites containing information on science and engineering, the site also boasts a news archive and a

communications forum. It is an attempt to bring together people in the science community for their mutual benefit.

Uffen is a professor at Michigan State University. He, like many others, found that research on the Internet was time consuming and seldom useful. He felt this was because of the disorganized nature of the web. So, along with a postdoctoral student who was a highly skilled webmaster, he "set out to create order out of chaos!"

Viewing the site, it is obvious that Uffen succeeded. The user is initially presented with a menu of general scientific areas. After selecting an area of interest a menu of more specific topics in that area is presented. Usually,

a selection from this menu will take the user to a number of links related to their topic.

A very efficient site, *SciCentral* has gained much public interest. Since the its launch on June 4, 1997 it has received more than 900,000 hits — an average of between 500 and 1000 visitors daily.

Material is not limited to information from the United States.

"As a metadirectory, the directories we link are international and must represent all aspects of the discipline," assures Uffen.

This site is worth bookmarking for anyone with an interested in science or scientific research.