

Toxic Levels of Copper Found in Port Mouton Bay

--New Study Reveals Nova Scotia's Marine Environment Threatened--

Port Mouton, Nova Scotia, Canada – Open-net fish farm practices are causing sea-surface and sediment contamination by the release of toxic levels of copper, and putting marine life at risk near the open-net fish farm in Port Mouton Bay, Queens County, Nova Scotia.

This is the result of a study completed by Halifax oceanographer Dr. Ronald H. Loucks, which has been published in the internationally recognized scientific journal ***Marine Pollution Bulletin***.

“This is new and valuable information,” says Dr. Loucks, *“and points to seriously harmful contaminants found in parts of the ocean layer not currently monitored by government regulators.”* The sea-surface microlayer is less than one millimeter thick, and Dr. Loucks believes this to be the first study to examine this layer for copper near an open-net fish farm. Other investigations have found trace metals, bacteria, viruses and pesticides accumulating in the microlayer.

The study identifies that the copper contamination in both the sediment and the sea-surface microlayer exceeds guideline levels for the protection of marine life. In the microlayer, it exceeds guidelines by up to 11 times. Copper is used both in the fish feed used in fish farms and in the anti-foulant compounds used for cleaning the farm nets. The copper can travel and contaminate surface areas over distances greater than one kilometer, given the wind velocities in Port Mouton Bay. Unfortunately, lobster larvae and fish eggs are at risk if they enter the microlayer layer at this stage of their life cycle.

Copper was still found to be present 27 months after the beginning of the fallow (emptying) of the farm site.

The farm at Port Mouton is now owned by Ocean Trout Farms Inc., who plan to restock shortly.

The study abstract is located at
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025326X12002457>

(Please scroll down to read abstract, highlights, and view diagrams)

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Because of continued concern for the health of its Bay, the Friends of Port Mouton Bay (FPMB) have sent the results of this study to Premier Darrell Dexter and his Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Environment, Hon. Sterling Belliveau – amongst others.

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