

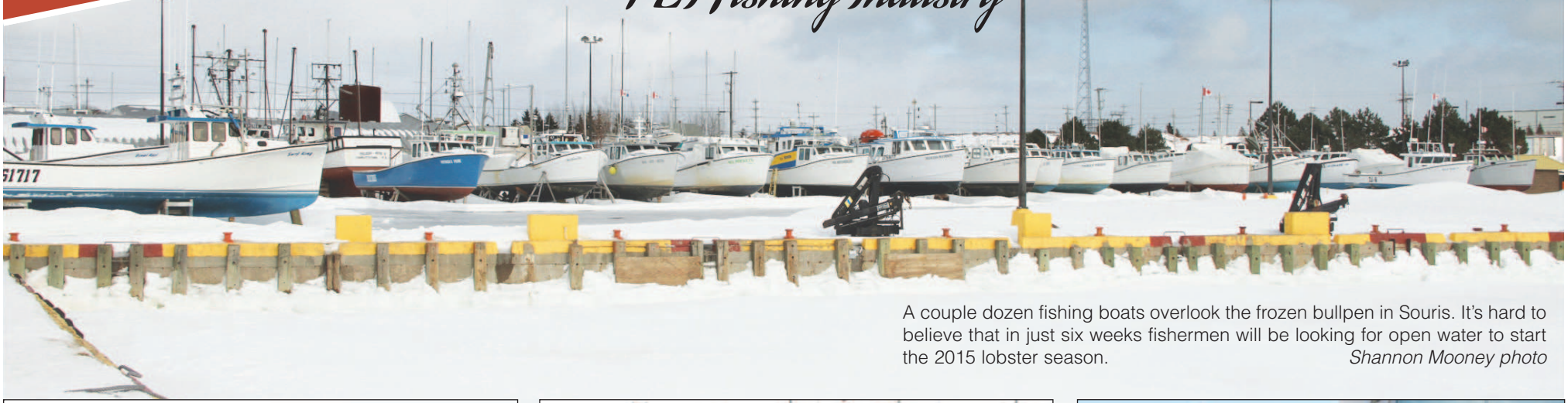
FISHERIES 2015

THE EASTERN
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West Prince Graphic

SECTION B
March 18, 2015

*Saluting the
PEI Fishing Industry*



A couple dozen fishing boats overlook the frozen bullpen in Souris. It's hard to believe that in just six weeks fishermen will be looking for open water to start the 2015 lobster season.
Shannon Mooney photo



Looking out into bullpen, from a trap shed at Souris Harbour, water is barely visible. Fishermen say ice is a concern every year, and it's just too early to tell whether it will create an issue for the spring fishery which starts May 1.
Shannon Mooney photo



Above photo: Jude's Point Harbour is home to Royal Star Foods Ltd. It was the site of a Western Gulf Fishermen's Association information meeting, held last April. The meeting took place in the dark, during a power outage.
Graphic file photo



Above photo: Cory Gallant (left) and Doug Fraser unloaded a crate of lobster at the wharf in Northport last June.
Graphic file photo



Team Happy Fishers was the last boat to head out on the final day of the Tuna Cup Challenge in North Lake, September, 2014.
Graphic file photo

Fishermen hopeful 2015 prices will match increased demand for lobster

By David MacDonald
Special to the Graphic

It's the nature of the fishing industry to have its ups and downs. It is also in the nature of many fishermen to remain optimistic about the future of an industry, which by some estimates employs 8,500 Islanders and pumps \$300 million into the Island's economy.

Jeff MacNeill, a North Lake fisherman who fishes for both lobster and tuna, appears to sum up the thoughts of many who land those particular species as they look forward to the 2015 season.

"The demand and the price are good for lobster and the quota has gone up for tuna. It's a really good time for the fishing industry," Mr MacNeill said.

The lobster industry saw an upswing in the 2014 season. Figures from the PEI Fishermen's Association show that a total of 29,116,206 pounds were landed in Island ports, compared to 28,768,817 pounds in 2013.

Prices also increased across the board, although they still weren't as high as many fishermen would have liked them to be. The spring fishery saw canners fetch between \$3.50 and \$3.75 a pound and market-size from \$4 to \$4.25, while prices were \$3.50 for canners and \$4 for markets during the fall season.

Bobby Jenkins, chair of the LFA



The Sheri Lynn boat sits amongst the snow banks and ice awaiting the 2015 lobster season at Souris harbour.
Shannon Mooney photo

26A Lobster Advisory Board, said he's hopeful prices will increase further in the 2015 season. He notes the Canadian dollar is around 80 cents US, and on that basis prices should go up 10 to 15 per cent.

While overall landings were up in general across the Island, the fall fishery in LFA 24 had a slower season. PEIFA president Craig

Avery said it "was down quite a bit" compared to 2013.

"We're not really sure why," he said. "It's something we'll be watching. There was a slow start getting going, and the colder water temperature may be part of the cause."

Exports of PEI lobster have been of major importance to the lobster industry and the PEI economy as a whole. Mr Avery said a

Chinese buyer recently signed a contract involving the shipping of two million pounds this year, while a European buyer bought "a couple hundred thousand pounds" last year and plans to buy more.

That European market may become even more lucrative for Island lobster fishermen thanks to recent international developments. Allen Roach, who is the

new Fisheries Minister, notes the industry recently received an eco-certification from the Marine Stewardship Council, which verifies environmentally-sustainable practices.

"It helps us in seeking buyers in key European markets," Mr Roach said. "A lot of places in the EU won't buy lobster unless they have this certification so it opens up that market for us."

Another development is the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union, which if approved by both Canadian and European parliaments, may go into effect as early as 2016. The agreement would eliminate most tariffs on goods shipped between the two entities.

"Right now, we pay a very high percentage rate if we ship product (to the EU)," Mr Roach said. "If we don't have to pay that tariff, those dollars come right back into the fishermen's pockets."

The Asian market has also been growing for some time, especially countries like China and Korea. Mr Jenkins hopes to see that continued growth, especially in light of higher landings over the years.

"Twenty years ago, 100 million to 150 million pounds were landed in Maine and Atlantic Canada. Now we're catching 350 million pounds," he said.

See page B2



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From page 1 - Fishermen hopeful

When asked if there was potential for a glut market, he said, "There's a lot of product on the move. I don't like to use the word 'glut'. Sometimes it's better to have more product to move. We have to get into China and Korea; we can't rely on the US to take 80 per cent (of PEI lobsters) anymore."

One concern, as fishermen gear up for the spring fishery, is ice conditions off PEI. Mr Jenkins said the ice pack is the worst since the 1980s.

"If we don't get the right kind of weather, we won't be going out on the first (of May)," he said. "We've gone through this in the past with the season postponed due to ice conditions. You go when it's safe to go out. The catches still came in basically the same as the previous year."

PEI tuna fishermen may also see some added benefits this year, thanks to a recent decision by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna to increase the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna quota to 2,000 metric tonnes, from 1,750 metric tonnes, with Island fishermen receiving some of that added quota. This is the first increase to the quota since 1990.

Mr MacNeill, who fishes tuna out of North Lake, said the increased quota will likely mean an additional 60 to 70 tuna landed this year; more fishermen may be able to get a second tag later in the season, allowing them to land a second tuna.

"The average price of a tuna is \$7,000 or \$8,000, so that would mean \$4 million of revenue for the PEI economy."

The herring season in Area 16G, which covers the north-eastern and eastern shores of PEI, got off to a slow start in 2014, and it didn't improve much as the season progressed. Chuck White, chairperson for the Area 16G Herring Advisory Board, said fishermen were 900 metric tons short of their overall quota of 3,535 metric tons.

"It was a really slow start. It did pick up a bit and it looked like it was going to be okay, then it stopped again," Mr White said. As a result, some fishermen in Area 16G had fewer nights of fishing - nine last season as opposed



Matthew MacSwain, below, and his father Garry unload herring at Machon Point in October 2014. *Graphic file photo*



web extra

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Additional video under Eastern Graphic "Landing herring at Machon Point"

to 12 the year before.

The reason for lower catches might also be due, in part, to fewer fishermen catching the herring. Mr White said the number of licenses were down from 79 to 53 for fishermen catching herring off Fisherman's Bank, while in North Lake, 30 fishermen went out for herring this past season as opposed to 67 in 2013.

Mr White noted that while herring numbers have decreased overall in the last few years, Fisherman's Bank has seen an abundance of herring lately and some individual fishermen who set their nets on that ground have caught more this year than last. However, the overall catch decreased due to fewer boats and the daily quota imposed on those who ventured out.

"With the larger school on Fisherman's Bank, if we had the same number of vessels this year as last, I'm confident we would've filled the quota."

Other herring fishing areas on PEI saw better results. Mr White said area 16F, which includes the south shore of PEI, had also started off slow but got stronger as the season progressed, while Area 16E in Western PEI filled its quota.

Mr White said he's at a loss

as to why overall herring numbers are down. Some of the theories include changes in migration and water temperature, but "honestly, we don't know."

Herring is typically used as bait for lobster and crab fishermen, although there is a Japanese market for the fish. But Mr White said the Japanese market went down this year, which meant herring fishermen were more dependent on the bait market.

Mr White noted that higher lobster prices last season meant some fishermen may choose not to fish herring, which sometimes can be a painstaking task with fishermen sometimes working all day and all night. "It's a messy job; a lot of time for little return."

The mackerel fishery is also primarily a bait fishery. A total of approximately 29,000 tons were landed.

Michael MacDonald, co-chair of the Groundfish Advisory Board, said mackerel in eastern PEI seem to be larger in size than in the west. But the fish are sporadically located, and stocks have been decreasing over the years. He said there are several theories why.

"Overfishing is one thing, and there is speculation the mackerel are moving further north because it's too warm.

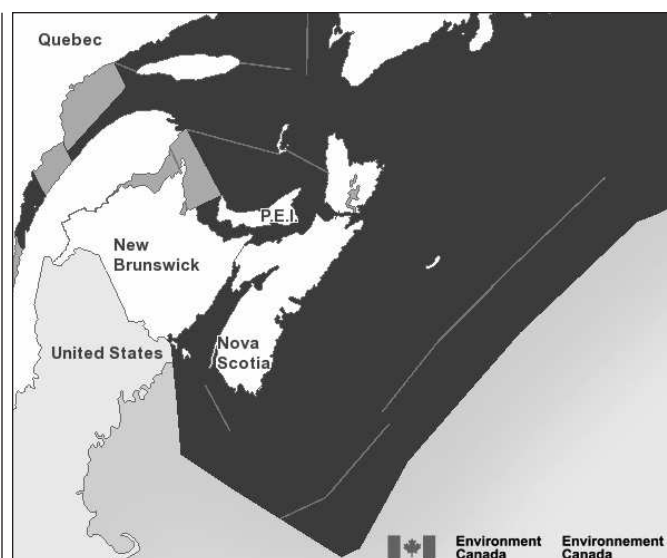
Five to eight degrees are the preferred water temperature (for mackerel)."

Other important species for Island fishermen include mussels and oysters. Mr Roach said he sees some great movement in the \$60 million mussel industry, putting emphasis on the PEI Mussel King plant in Morell, well known for its Frozen Cultured PEI Mussels line of products. He also said PEI oysters are a highly-sought item in the North American marketplace.

During the time of this interview, Mr Roach was preparing to represent the PEI government for the annual Boston Seafood Trade Show earlier this month. About 100 companies and individuals from PEI were represented at the show.

Mr Roach said the trade show is an opportunity for buyers and sellers to come together, recounting several instances of local processors making deals on the spot to buy product. He noted PEI had a record year in 2014 for out-of-country exports, more than \$1 billion in sales, with food products comprising more than 50 per cent.

"PEI is a brand that is sold around the world," Mr Roach said. "When we have our PEI booths set up with PEI processors, the buyers come there to find us and make deals."



The dark coloured regions indicate ice warnings are in effect. As the image shows, there is an ice pressure warning and freezing spray warning in effect for the north and south sides of PEI waters, in the Northumberland Strait (south side) and the lower, southern regions of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence (on the north side of PEI). The weekend's northwest and northeast winds caused more extreme ice flows to push into the Gulf of St Lawrence. *Photo from weather.gc.ca*

Ice plugs the waters as countdown to 2015 season nears

By Shannon Mooney
shannon@peicanada.com

The spring lobster season is still six weeks away but thick ice, 70-120cm thick, has jammed into the waters surrounding the entire province.

An ice report from DFO, late last week, said Northumberland Strait still has a significant amount of ice, while ice in the southern region of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence is greater than 120cm.

As well last weekend's northwest winds were expected to create even more ice flow.

However, some lobster fishermen say it's premature to predict a delay in the 2015 lobster season, which opens May 1.

Jeff MacNeill, of MacNeill's PEI Tuna and Deep Sea Fishing Charters, on the north side, said the last time the May season was delayed was about 20 years ago.

Mr MacNeill fishes tuna and lobster out of North Lake and in his estimation, it all comes down to the winds and tide.

He remembers losing about 90 traps the first night of the season one time due to ice. Other fishermen lost more gear.

"PEI is a brand that is sold around the world," Mr Roach said. "When we have our PEI booths set up with PEI processors, the buyers come there to find us and make deals."

A south-side fisherman, who sets his gear in the Northumberland Strait, said ice is a concern every spring.

"With the right weather and winds, it could be good, and the ice could be all

gone before the season starts," he said. "But it could just as easily not."

Scott Bruce, of Bruce Brothers Charters, in North Lake, said the ice isn't a concern, now; though a few days before setting day could be a different story.

"Anything can happen in the amount of days that are left," Mr Bruce said.

Mr MacNeill has 30 years experience on the water.

"My grandfather used to say, 'if you have a winter with no ice, don't spend any money because there will be no lobster in the spring'," Mr MacNeill said. "I'm banking on lots of lobster this year."

The more ice, he said, the more protection on the ocean floor.

A delay in the lobster season, in Mr MacNeill's opinion, wouldn't be so bad.

"We've missed a couple days before and it never really hurt us in the long run," Mr Bruce said.

Mr MacNeill said delaying the season, with or without extra days added to the end, doesn't matter. The catch will be the same anyway, and there may be less output costs, like fuel and labour, with a slightly shorter season.

"Ice isn't the place to be with our boats," Mr MacNeill said.

It will hook traps and lines, break them off and carry them out to sea, losing both equipment and product.

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Mom and pop clam business starting to take great strides

By Connor Doucette
connor@peicanada.com

For two rural Islanders who have started their own bar clam business in Conway, in western PEI, things are finally taking off.

"It's been a lot of work to get to this point, but it's starting to get moving now," said Carla Annand, who along with her husband David, own and operate Annand Clams.

The business is breaking new ground on PEI as the first to package and sell bar clams, and like many Island businesses they came from humble beginnings.

"It started with just the two of us and a small building near our house," said Mr Annand, who has more than 30 years experience fishing

bar clams.

Mrs Annand has worked in quality assurance in many different plants throughout West Prince, and when it comes to her own business, she makes sure only the best product is offered to customers.

Those customers are quickly becoming more and more numerous, as the couple is now shipping product to Ontario and looking to break into American markets. Over the weekend they made a trip to Boston to showcase what they have to offer.

"It's a great opportunity and we're excited," Mrs Annand said.

"We wanted to start putting out more product so we decided to take the next step and upgrade our working space," she said, explain-

ing how they've come to their location in Conway. "This building used to be a plant I worked at. It had been on the market for about five years when we decided to take it over and so far it's working great for us. We've been in this new plant for a year, and before moving here things felt like they weren't going fast enough. Now we're building up momentum and going to these new places, and it's great."

During the year the Annands hire up to 17 workers at the plant, and they produce everything from regular fresh clam meat to bottled meat, deep-fried clam, fish cakes, tarts, and half-shells, which are becoming particularly popular.

"Chefs have been telling



David and Carla Annand, co-owners and operators of Annand Clams in Conway, show off their bottled clams, which they took to a recent show in Boston. Annand Clams is the only business on PEI that processes and packages clam products for sale, and already has deals with many store locations across the province.

Connor Doucette photo

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us how much they like them, because they not only taste good, but they look good when you have the meat still in the shell like that," Mrs Annand said.

Some of the challenges the Annands have faced over the years have been getting enough sales to make their business viable, and spreading the word about their product.

"We've been getting a lot of support at the start though," Mrs Annand said. "The government has helped fund us to get started, and we've received funding from other groups, so it's helped us get going."

"The support from the fishermen has been great as well," Mr Annand said. "They understand that by helping us they help themselves too. We're all working together to help each other."



Annand Clams produces many different clam products such as fresh meat, bottled clams, tarts, fish cakes, fried clams, and half-shell clams. The products are spreading across Canada already and the Annands have taken them down to Boston to try and break into the American markets.

Connor Doucette photo

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The Jeffrey brothers Wyatt, Troy, and Gordon had a visit from Doug Stephen of Manitoba late last year. This past January they were invited out to a shellfish festival in Manitoba organized by Stephen as judges and promoters of PEI. Submitted photo

Sealers patiently wait for go-ahead to put licences to use

By Charlotte MacAulay
charlotte@peicanada.com

The quota for the 2015 seal hunt in the North Atlantic is set at 460,000, but most PEI licence holders won't be heading out onto the ice this year to harvest their share.

They haven't taken part in the hunt for the past six years, not since the European Union, EU, put a ban on seal products.

Yet, it is important for sealers to renew those licences every year.

It's not a matter of use it or lose it, rather there is a freeze in effect for all areas of Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

In 2013, there were more than 13,000 commercial licences issued to sealers, but only an estimated 975 of those were active.

Still there is plenty going on behind the scenes.

Kenneth MacLeod, seal representative at the PEI Fisherman's Association, is one of those license holders and he said there is good reason to keep the licences renewed.

"Traditionally there was a market for harp seals, and you never know when things might turn around," he said.

There are six species of seal, the harp, hooded, grey, ringed, bearded and harbour, found in the north Atlantic and of those, it is the harp that is harvested the most along with small amounts of grey and hooded.

Approximately 94,000 harp seals were harvested during the commercial hunt in 2013. This is an increase from the 71,000 seals harvested in 2012.

Yet, there has been a gradual decline since the ban was put in place as the harvested number in 2008 was 218,000.

Even though the markets have dropped dramatically since the ban was introduced, there are still markets out there.

Norway, Russia and Turkey are all still open for business, but it's hard to get at those markets because in some cases you still have to go through the EU ports, Mr MacLeod said.

Grey seals, which traditionally there hasn't been much of a market for, are on the radar these days for a couple of reasons.

In 2012, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans made several recommendations in relation to the grey seal population on the Atlantic coast.

One is to have a regulated cull put in place to control the numbers, which are decimating the cod stock and have been since 1991.

"We are pushing to have that cull put in place and there are proposals on the table," Mr MacLeod said.

Though there hasn't been much of a market for grey seals in the past, Mr MacLeod said that is changing.

"We have great interest from China, and they are interested in the whole seal, not just the fur," he said.

Mr MacLeod, who lives in Murray River, has been a fisherman for almost 35 years. He fishes lobster, crab, tuna, silversides and maybe some day again seals.



This grey seal pup, approximately three weeks old, wandered near a road in Georgetown in mid February. Fisheries officers captured it and brought it to the north side of the Island to let it go. It's not unusual for seals to make their way across land in the direction of water.

Charlotte MacAulay photo

PEI shellfish gets rave reviews at Winnipeg festival

By Connor Doucette
connor@peicanada.com

A growing market for fresh, quality shellfish in Canada today is far from the waters off PEI - it is on the Prairies, in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In fact for the first time, this past January a PEI Shellfish Festival was hosted in the western city, with local shellfish industry businessmen travelling to the festival for four days to share their product and promote PEI.

Liam Dolan, chair of Restaurants Canada and owner of the Claddagh Oyster House, in Charlottetown, said it all began when Manitoba restaurateur Doug Stephen arrived on PEI for last year's Shellfish Festival, and saw what the industry has to offer.

"We were talking to one another and he was saying how great the festival was, and how he had this great idea where we could bring it all the way out west," Mr Dolan explained. "I told him 'fill your boots', if you can manage to pull it off in Manitoba, in the middle of January, you'll have my support and the support of the other shellfish businessmen too."

Sure enough, only a couple months later, Mr Dolan received a call from WOW! Hospitality concepts, Mr Stephen's business, asking him to head out to the festival.

"It was a great opportunity to promote PEI," he said. "The first day of the festival, myself and the others who went out were on three different breakfast TV shows all on the same morning. The people of Winnipeg woke up to PEI, hearing about it and what it has to offer."

Wyatt Jeffrey, with Five Star Shellfish Inc in Freeland, made the trip west along with his brothers and Five Star co-owners Troy and Gordon Jeffrey.

Five Star Shellfish is a raw molluscan shellfish processing facility that processes oysters, quahaugs and soft/hard shell clams for export into both the Canadian and the United States Marketplace. It went into operation in 2002 and has a full time staff of five to seven people.

"When they showed up for a tour of the plant back in the fall we were all at work. Gordon and I in our rubber boots and covered in mud and what not. Not exactly set to show off," he said. "But they were really excited by it, they really liked it. So awhile later they called and told us about the festival they were planning and invited us out as judges. I don't think any of us expected it."

The Jeffrey brothers left for the festival on January 15, and when they got there it was a blast, Wyatt said.

"We were sharing out product with people and telling them about the industry and the Island," he said. "We did a lot shucking ourselves and showing people how to do it. A lot of people had never eaten an oyster before, so the lineup was a mile long just to get a taste."

The festival was sold out, with all proceeds going to charity to help underprivileged children. The comments about the quality of the PEI product were very good, Mr Dolan said.

"Everyone was very, very pleased with it, and a lot said they were interested in coming to PEI in the future," he said. "These were the kind of people we wanted to reach; people who have the money and are looking for somewhere to visit. Well, we told them, PEI is the place for them."

With the event proving to be such a big success, Mr Dolan is now hoping other places throughout Canada jump on the bandwagon and host their own shellfish festivals.

"We could go to Saskatchewan, Edmonton, Calgary, and any number of other places," Mr Dolan said. "There's a lot of potential in these places for the PEI shellfish industry, and it's only going to keep growing from here."

Seals harvested in the past 10 years

Previous harvest levels* for harp seals over the last decade are as follows:

- 38,000 in 2011
- 69,000 in 2010
- 77,000 in 2009
- 218,000 in 2008
- 225,000 in 2007
- 355,000 in 2006
- 324,000 in 2005
- 366,000 in 2004
- 290,000 in 2003
- 312,000 in 2002

*Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

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The Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation kept an eye on a test plot in the Cross River, on the Souris Line Road, this fall and found this salmon resting in a pool during one of their checks. Submitted photo



Michael Jacklyn, stream enhancement technician with the Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation points out a salmon Redd in one of the waterways. Submitted photo

Eastern PEI environmental group encouraged by natural salmon stocks

By Charlotte MacAulay
charlotte@peicanada.com

The possibility that the salmon swimming in the rivers in eastern PEI are as pristine and natural as the woods surrounding the waters is exciting for The Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Association, SAB, coordinator Fred Cheverie said.

"They have never been stocked and the hypothesis is they are the original species," he said.

As the numbers increase, the environmental group is hoping evidence will show there are enough fish to sustain a fall recreational catch and release fishery.

Still, there is a lot of work to be done before members of the environmental group can come to any conclusions.

The revelation came last year when SAB received the results of fin sample tests taken from North Lake Creek and Cross River back in 2011. The results showed the fish had no close genetic relationship to samples from rivers in the other Atlantic provinces.

On top of that, while salmon numbers have dropped dramatically in the Atlantic region in 2014, numbers in eastern PEI have been on a steady rise.

Over the years many rivers in the region have been stocked with salmon from a tributary of the Miramichi River in New Brunswick, but not here, Mr Cheverie said.

While salmon numbers have dropped dramatically in the Atlantic region in 2014, numbers in eastern PEI have been on a steady rise.

Restoration, not stocking has been the priority.

From the 1970s to 2005, sporadic work has been carried out in the waterways within the SAB coverage area including Souris, Cross, Hay, Naufrage and Fortune Rivers as well as North and East Lake, Basin Head and Priest Pond Creeks.

Since then, annual funding from the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund has made it possible to clear rivers of beaver dams and silt, therefore creating natural spawning habitat for the salmon.

Counts of Redds, the nest of spawning salmon, have been recorded in some or all of the waterways since 2008.

The eggs hatch in the spring and the smolts stay in the area until the third year when they



Fred Cheverie, coordinator of the Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation is excited about research that shows salmon in eastern PEI rivers may be the original species. The results have sparked new initiatives to bringing recreation salmon fishing to the area. Charlotte MacAulay photo

head out to sea.

The next step towards establishing whether there will be numbers to sustain a catch and release recreational fishery is to track the young salmon when they leave and when they come back. This will be done by implanting chips in the fish.


There are several funding and research opportunities being explored to carry that out.

SAB is confident a growing population, paired with the pristine natural habitat, will result in a viable fishery.


When the salmon come back to their original place of birth they are a force to be reckoned with as the average size is eight-12 pounds with some weighing as much as 30 pounds.

Their size and fight is what makes them so popular for recreational fishers, Mr Cheverie said.

Wishing all the fishers calm seas, and fair skies.
Be safe guys, enjoy fishing and have a fantastic and successful 2015 season!



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Royal Star processing facility take pride in teamwork

By Cindy Chant
cindy@peicanada.com

For Francis Morrissey, manager of Royal Star Food at Judes Point, being proud of what the company does for the community is just one more feather in his cap.

Royal Star Foods has been in business since 1922. It formally started with seven members, led by Chester McCarthy and grew from there.

"We have our good years and we have our rough years," Mr Morrissey said. "There is one thing about it, the majority of the fishermen have been loyal to the company and stayed true through the good and the bad. They feel very proud of owning their own company and what they have achieved throughout the years."

According to Mr Morrissey, Royal Star is 100 per cent owned by Tignish Fisheries Co-op Association's 185 members. Each owns one share in the company.

Although all the fishermen in the area do not belong to the co-operative, Mr Morrissey is encouraged by the growing number of members over the past several years.

Mr Morrissey explained how the co-operative receives applications throughout the year: a review is conducted by the board of directors for any interested parties before accepting new members. The purpose of the strict application process is to keep control of the company, Mr Morrissey said.

"We have to look at if we have the capacity to handle the product coming in," he said. "We don't want to overwhelm our infrastructure."

The seafood processing facility is currently 75,000 square feet and has recently been updated with new storage units.

There are currently two shifts running at the facility throughout the summer months and the company employs as many as 318 workers.

The company is proud there are as many as 60 high school students hired in peak season and as many as 20 university students, Mr Morrissey said. University students work a full shift while the younger students do part time week days and full time on weekends.

"We work with Westisle High



Francis Morrissey, manager of Royal Star Foods, a subsidiary of Tignish Fisheries Co-op Association Ltd, for the past five years takes pride for his committed workforce and members. Cindy Chant photo

School and if there are exams, the students are not allowed to work. This applies to other school functions the students need to attend as well.

"We make sure they can go," Mr Morrissey said. "It's very important the company can do that. We have students who start here in Grade 10 and work here for seven years."

Mr Morrissey stands behind the company's numbers when it comes to student employee retention.

"Ninety per cent stay for the length of their mandate and are very good workers. It's amazing to watch them when they come in. The students don't have a lot of confidence and are shy, but within two weeks you would think they were in the facility for 10 years. Just to see the expression on their faces when they get their paycheque, it's

worth it."

Mr Morrissey admits the work can be challenging, especially when some employees put in as many as 70 hours per week at peak time.

The facility is able to hold 700,000 pounds of live lobsters.

"That was all built and paid for by our own money," Mr Morrissey said. "No government assistance whatsoever."

Last year, a new cold storage, which will hold 3.5 million pounds, enables the company to extend the work period. More hours were also created as workers are able to load the company's own containers. By having the storage units, there is better control due to their product being on site as well.

"It made economic sense to build our own cold storage," he

said. "It's paying for itself."

Royal Star entered into a program, where Islanders can invest in Island companies.

Mr Morrissey explained, anyone who invested into the company, received a 35 per cent tax credit and if an individual invested in a RRSP there would also be a 35 per cent RRSP saving.

"That's basically a 70 per cent tax credit," he said. "Last year, we were very lucky, we sold our full amount of \$3 million. That money was used to construct our cold storage unit."

One of the biggest challenges, according to Mr Morrissey, has been keeping a workforce over the past five years.

"We have been lucky to have such a large area to draw from for employment, but it has been a struggle sometimes."

Mr Morrissey stands behind his long-term employees some of whom have been there for 50 years.

At the end of each processing season, Mr Morrissey personally shakes his employee's hands.

"It doesn't cost the company a cent to shake their hands and thank them for their work," he said.

During the spring season, there are 220 employees working on the day shift and 80 on the night shift.

Royal Star also provides a program for mothers, who have the option to come to work when the day care is open and leave when the day care closes.

Royal Star currently ships products all over the world with Asia just making its mark into the market.

"Canada is lucky because we have healthy stocks, stable fisheries, high quality water (clean, clear and free of pollution), and have one of the strictest regulations to ensure the stock remains viable," Mr Morrissey said. "We have a great working relationship with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We don't always get what we want, but we always come up with a compromise."

According to Mr Morrissey, 2014 was a good year, prices started to rebound and the catches were good.

Fishermen say it's important to label our product 'Canadian'

By Shannon Mooney
shannon@peicanada.com

For years, lobster caught in the United States and in Canada has been labelled and sold as "homarus americanus," leaving the impression it is all American product.

Some eastern PEI fishermen say the scientific Latin label, meaning American lobster, causes confusion as to where the product truly originates.

According to one fisherman, with new Canadian lobster markets and new branding strategies, the two products are finally beginning to be recognized internationally as separate. At least in China.

PEI Fishermen's Association President, Craig Avery said, the plan is in progress, as processors are working with government in Ottawa "to put Canadian lobster on their packaging."

"I'm hoping that will be changed soon," Mr Avery said. "If we want to brand our lobster as a Canadian lobster, we want to be able to put Canadian lobster on the package."

Souris fisherman John MacPhee said as far as he knows, with some of the newer, merging markets, Canadian lobster is being branded and marketed as such.

"PEI is starting to speciality brand, too," Mr MacPhee said.

"I would love to see a Canadian label on it, for sure," he said. It would help the trade to "develop our own quality product."

North Lake fisherman Scott Bruce feels the word 'Canadian' on labels is important.

"It would be nice if our Canadian lobster was sold as Canadian," he said. "Then the American lobster that comes up to a fish plant here, be sold as American."

Francis Stewart, also a North Lake fisherman, agrees.

"They're (American lobster) definitely not the quality of lobsters we have," Mr Stewart said.

"Nothing compares to our spring lobster," Mr MacPhee said. "Nothing in the world."

"But we're interlinked, with the US," Mr Bruce said. "We have to work with them, and they have to work with us because our fish plants need lobster from there to keep them going."

"I think PEI gets the short end of the stick," Mr Stewart said. "We have to go by what other people say, we can't seem to get somebody to stand up for us."

For Mr Bruce, a lobster levy, if all other lobster fishing provinces do it together, to "promote Canadian lobster in general - is a great idea."

But for PEI to try it, "I don't see us having enough impact to make it worthwhile," he said.

Mr Stewart said he can go either way with the levy, though it depends if the money is used for what they say it'll be used for.

Here's to a safe and prosperous year for all Island Fishermen!

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Strong halibut comeback sees fishermen looking for increased and fair quota

Technology used to track fish's migration

By David MacDonald

Special to the Graphic

Those who fish halibut in the waters of the Southern Gulf of St Lawrence are hoping a unique research project spearheaded by the PEI Fishermen's Association (PEIFA) will result in a boost to the quota for the abundant groundfish.

The project, formally known as the Atlantic Halibut Life History and Population Genetics in the Southern Gulf of St Lawrence project, involves the tagging of halibut in the hopes of better understanding their movement and migration patterns.

A total of \$153,600 went into the project, with funds coming from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the PEI Department of Fisheries (through its Aquaculture and Fisheries Research Initiative), the PEI Atlantic Shrimp Corporation as well as the PEIFA and the local fishermen's associations across the Island.

As part of the project, Travis James, a graduate student from UPEI, worked alongside fishermen to tag the halibut and help conduct the research which monitors the movement of the fish via satellite technology.

But the information-gathering has a dual purpose, as the association and Island fishermen hope the study's results will prove the Southern Gulf's halibut population is large enough to withstand an increase in the quota.

Unlike other fisheries like lobster and herring, time is of the essence for those who venture out to land halibut. The quota is so small and caught so quickly that oftentimes fishermen finish the



Captain Jim Purdy, centre, with the Canadian Coast Guard and his crew; Dave Doucet, right, and Rex Barnes, left, of the Pointe Caveau, were on board the vessel that located and retrieved the first of two satellite tags in a study of halibut being conducted by the PEIFA. The tags will help reveal if there is a significant population of halibut in the south of the Gulf of St Lawrence, and whether PEI should have its own halibut fishery, independent from other provinces. Submitted photo

season in just one day. There are currently 270 registered halibut licenses, with an Island quota of approximately 24.8 tons.

Danny Arsenault, a groundfish committee member and halibut fisherman from Tignish, said that

since 2007, the restricted quota for halibut for the southern section of the Gulf of St Lawrence has been a thorn in the side of Island fishermen.

"Right now there's one quota on all of it, and we get only a small amount of it. About 90 per cent goes to Quebec and Newfoundland. That's because when it was created it was built off an understanding of the history in the fishery. But it only looked at the past 40 years, which happened to be bad for us. Now we've been cut out of the deal even though there are plenty of fish out there now."

Local halibut fishermen have tried to no avail to have changes made, Mr Arsenault said.

"We argued and argued every year at the meetings about the quota," he said. "We wanted more of a share, but they paid no heed to us."

Michael MacDonald, a halibut fisherman from North Lake and co-chair of the Groundfish Advisory Board, said, "We're fighting for quota; it's a hard struggle."

While quota hasn't moved in some time, the actual halibut stock has increased "exponentially" over the past decade, Laura Ramsay, research officer for the PEIFA, said. In past years, the quota would oftentimes be accidentally overfished, but Ms Ramsay said a new management program recently implemented has allowed fishermen to stay within the quota.

Ms Ramsay said the hope is that the results of the research will have positive implications for the halibut quota.

"There may be a possibility of a separate spawning area in the Gulf, like there is with cod, which has a northern stock and a southern stock," she said.

Halibut tagging began November 2013 in the waters off Morell with satellite pop-up tags placed on two adult halibut. Those tags collected data that included the location of the fish, water temperature and other factors, until October 2014 when the tags popped off the fish and sent off signals via satellite.

"(The halibut) had to be at least 135 cm to ensure they were sexually mature females – halibut that were more likely to go out to spawn," Mr MacDonald said.

The results so far look promising, with one tag ending up in the waters between Morell and the Magdalen Islands, and the other on the Laurentian Channel north of the Magdalen Islands.

Only one of the tags was physically retrieved, with the assistance of the crew of the Pointe Caveau Coast Guard vessel. It was returned to the PEIFA, but thanks to the satellite technology, information was collected on the second tag as well.

The satellite tagging project

expanded this past fall with 18 additional halibut being tagged and released. Those tags are expected to pop off in August 2015. There is a \$500 reward for anyone who finds a satellite tag. (The crew of the Pointe Caveau donated their reward to the Royal Canadian Legion.)

Mr MacDonald hopes the research will prove halibut stocks have similarities to the northern and southern cod stocks, but "it's very preliminary. We don't have any conclusions yet," he said.

The second portion of the tagging project involves tagging hundreds of halibut with pink anchor tags. An initial 136 halibut were tagged in 2013, while 450 more were tagged in 2014. The PEIFA are dependent on fishermen to report tagged halibut by recording the tag number, location (latitude and longitude), length of fish and date. Fishermen who find these tags are entered into a draw for a \$1,000 prize to be given away at the next PEIFA annual meeting.

The association has gathered some valuable information from these tags as well.

"Most of them have only travelled a short distance. Most seem to come back to the same places year after year," Mr MacDonald said, but added some have travelled further distances including a couple of tagged halibut caught off North Lake that were released in North Rustico.

Mr MacDonald hopes more funding can be found to continue the project, but notes the current study is quite expensive with satellite tags costing \$2,000 apiece.

Prices during the halibut season ranged from \$4.50 to \$5 per pound, and Mr MacDonald believes the fishery would be more lucrative if boats were able to land more of the groundfish species. Right now, with the current quota, Mr MacDonald estimates a fisherman is only able to catch an average of 240 pounds.

"It'd be good to have a couple days fishing for everyone (if the quota were increased)," he said, "but time will tell."

"The interest from fishermen is huge," Ms Ramsay added. "There are lots of fish out there and PEI should be getting a fair share (of the quota)."

Our best wishes to all Island Fishers for a safe and successful fishing season.

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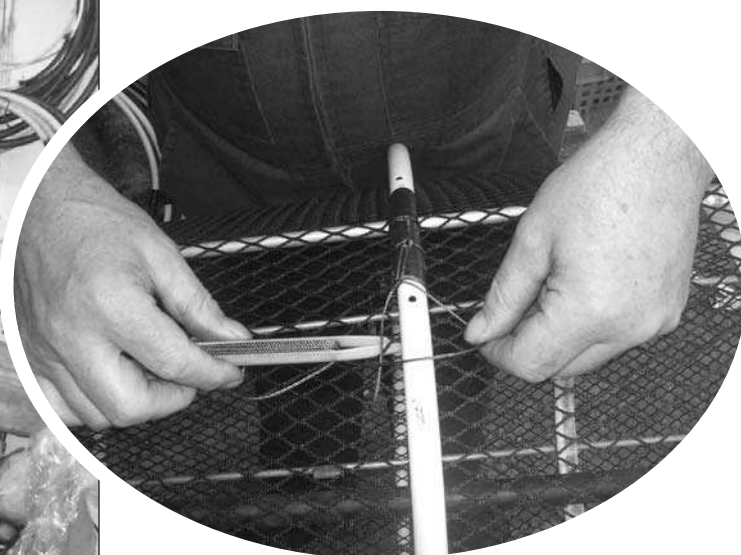
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Gearing up for eel season



Long time fisherman, Allan McInnis, from Tignish has seen a lot of changes in the eel industry over the past 44 years, but one constant shared by many is always the thrill of the catch. Mr McInnis is busy preparing and replacing old eel nets for the upcoming eel fishery.
Cindy Chant photo

Lobster fishermen will have to contend with paper log books one more season

By Shannon Mooney
shannon@peicanada.com

Some Island lobster fishermen are no more impressed with having to fill out paper log books this year than they were in 2014 when they were first introduced.

The logs, made mandatory by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, gather data on lobster migration and catch location.

The fact too that DFO had hoped an electronic system, rather than the paper version, would be in place by 2015, hasn't changed fishermen's opinions.

"They're mandatory and if you don't do them you'd be violating the laws of the fishing act and you'd be charged," Craig Avery, president of the PEI Fishermen's Association said.

Mr Avery said most Island fishermen have complied with the new regulation, though he is aware they don't want to fill them out and don't think the information will be used.

"We made it clear to the industry we would comply with electronic logging," Mr Avery said. "But we want it cost efficient. We have enough expense now. DFO was supposed to provide them, but we never heard anything back from them, yet."

One of the skeptics of the paper log books is North Lake fisherman Scott Bruce.

Mr Bruce said a trial electronic logbook was tested in North Lake prior to implementing the paper version.

"People didn't seem to mind electronic," Mr Bruce said. "But it was paper last year, and everybody knows what happens to paper log books. Nothing ever comes out of it, so it's a waste of time."

Francis Stewart has been fishing for the past six years and he ties his boat up at North Lake.

"I don't see the sense in them," he said. "The government gets a copy of all our slips anyway, so I don't know why we have to fill them out."

Mr Stewart said he forgot to submit the last two daily logs for the May-June lobster season in 2014, even though he had filled them out.

In the fall, he received a call reminding him there are penalties for not submitting the logs, and they don't want to charge fishermen, but need the logs.

"I had to send it in so I wouldn't get fined," he said.

"It's a nuisance," Mr Stewart said, adding that he can't see how the log information will help scientists determine migration patterns and catch locations.

The waters are designated by areas, and Mr Stewart said his fishing zone is Area 24.

"Area 24 covers a lot of ground," he said. "You don't really know where the fish are coming from."

"You'd have to almost put a tracer on one to find out," he said.

Mr Stewart anticipates lobster catches will soon be monitored on the wharfs as is the case with tuna and herring.

"Pretty well saw that coming when these logbooks came into effect," he said.

Another North Lake fisherman agrees. Jeff MacNeill, suggested it would be different if the information from the log books was actually used.

"The logbooks we submitted for the catch and release for the tuna fishery are sitting in an office and nobody's ever looked at them," Mr MacNeill said. "Same thing as all these logbooks for lobster, nobody's looked through them."

Marc Lanteigne, division manager at Aquatic Resources Division, with the science branch in Moncton, said the information in the logbooks is important.

"To understand the fishery, you need to know how much fish is being caught," he said. "When we want to have data about the fishery, we need to have information about what has been taken out of the water."

DFO claims information from the logs is important in the approval of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification.

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an independent certification and ecolabelling program. The blue MSC ecolabel appears on many products and tells consumers the product originated from a sustainable, viable food source. If approved, a label that certifies the product came from a sustainable, viable food source is issued.

The PEIFA will offer assistance to fishermen by having the logbooks available at a low cost.



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Souris harbour is plugged with ice this winter



A small stretch of open water is all that visible from the Souris harbour. Ice has been a significant challenge this winter to the ferry that sails from Souris to the Magdalen Islands. After repeatedly getting stuck in the ice the service now ties up in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Shannon Mooney photo

Cardigan Fish Hatchery has a long and diversified history

By Charlotte MacAulay
charlotte@peicanada.com

"It has become science based," Mike Murray, manager of the Cardigan Fish Hatchery said.

Fish farming isn't just taking fish eggs and adding water and a bit of food.



Chris Moyaert and Mike Murray are hard at work at the Cardigan Fish Hatchery looking after the salmon fry. Mr Moyaert checks the feed dispenser while Mr Murray sweeps waste from the bottom of another tank. This time of year each tank houses up to 400,000 new-hatched fish.

Charlotte MacAulay photo

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Additional video under Eastern Graphic "Cardigan Fish Hatchery"

Every aspect from what the fish are fed to making sure stocks are kept genetically strong, to keeping the water temperature controlled is all part of the operation.

There are three full time employees at the facility, but during spawning season, late in the fall, there are several seasonal employees as well. The Cardigan Fish Hatchery has been in operation in one form or another for more than 80 years. In the 1930s, the hatchery was established by the Federal Department of Fisheries with the purpose of stocking Island rivers and streams with several varieties of fish.

The University of Prince Edward Island took over the facility when the government divested it in 1997 and in 2005 Dover Fish Hatchery Limited bought purchased the hatchery. In June of 2014, the Cardigan and Dover Fish Hatcheries, both in Kings County, were purchased by the commercial operation, Northern Harvest Sea Farms of St Georges, New Brunswick and is solely used for the purpose of raising salmon to stock other Atlantic farms that raise them for consumers.

The Cardigan operation is an egg and fry supplier to other farms in Atlantic Canada. Some salmon are reared from the egg stage to smolts, three year olds, and are then sent to the Dover facility for their final year of growth.

Wayne Morrison, assistant manager in Dover, said when the smolts come to them, the eggs are extracted from the females and the milt from the males. The eggs are fertilized and incubated they spend a year growing into the smolt stage in the hatcheries before they are sent to sea cages in Newfoundland to be raised for consumption.

Mr Murray has been on the farm since the mid 80s and has seen the progression to the more science based industry.

The infrastructure includes several tanks to hold two million salmon, two wood chip burning boilers to keep water temperatures controlled and several outdoor tanks. The effort put into keeping the fish healthy is immense.

Even with all the modernization in the industry, he said, it is most likely the fish are all descendants of salmon from the St John River in New Brunswick as brooding

stock was acquired from there when the company changed hands in 2005.

There are currently five fin fish operations on PEI. The Cardigan and Dover sites as well as Aqua Bounty in Fortune work with salmon and there is a trout farm in Brookvale.

Halibut PEI, in Victoria, is the only operation which grows meat fish to sell directly for consumption.

According to the PEI government statistics, the fin fish aquaculture industry on the Island has grown from \$400,000 in 1993 to \$3.7 million in 2011.

Best of luck with preparations for the upcoming fishing season.

Prince Edward Island CANADA
Allen F. Roach, Minister Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development

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Blair Gallant sells salmon to a customer out of the back of his Mr. Seafood truck in Alberton last week. Mr Gallant gets plenty business at his location on Church Street where he sells salmon, haddock, muskels, and hake. Connor Doucette photo



These happy faces were enjoying a Paradise on the Sea Adventure tour with Captain Darren MacKinnon, who offers the tours throughout July and August. They have donned the wet suits in search of bar clams on the Rollo Bay flats. Submitted photo

Little Harbour fisherman diversifies to create future for his family

By Charlotte MacAulay
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Darren MacKinnon, of Little Harbour, has been a fisherman for 20 years and these days it's not just landings that provide him with a livelihood.

Back in 2009 when the blue fin tuna quota was cut, Mr MacKinnon decided to delve into the tourism business.

"There was nothing left to fish in the summertime and I did whatever I could to keep from going west," the father of four said.

Despite not knowing what to expect, in the summer of 2010 when he started Paradise on the Sea Adventures, a daily tour in and around the Rollo Bay flats, Mr MacKinnon slid into the role quite naturally.



Seven-year-old Porter MacKinnon loves spending the day on the water with his Dad Darren. The MacKinnon's tourism operation, Paradise on the Sea Adventures, provides day excursions throughout July and August out of Souris Harbour. Submitted photo

"There's lots of family around home all the time and we always went out (on the boat) Sunday afternoons for a tour around," he said.

Mr MacKinnon is a third generation fisherman and his son Porter is well on his way to becoming the fourth.

"He's got salt water in his veins," said Mr MacKinnon of the 7-year-old who spent a month on the boat during last year's lobster fishing season.

Another reason Mr MacKinnon was keen to start the touring business is to provide opportunities for his children as they grow.

"Looking down the road it will be great summer jobs for them," he said.

Fishing has always been a family business so it fits that tours are geared towards the same type of clientele.

On the Paradise tour, adventure seekers get a full day of learning about lobster and crab fishing, observing the antics of a local herd of seals, fishing for mackerel and diving for bar clams, which are steamed and enjoyed on board the boat.

The four-five hour excursion is popular with families, said

Captain Darren MacKinnon, of Little Harbour, not only fishes lobster and tuna on his 47-foot boat 'Pair a Dice', he is also running an adventure tourism business. Submitted photo



Captain Darren, as he's known on the boat. "We figure if people are going to spend one of their vacation days with us we want to make it the best experience possible."

Tuna charters are also a part of the business and though they are offered later in the fall they are just as popular.

Mr MacKinnon still fishes lobster in the spring and tuna in the fall.

He remains optimistic about lobster stocks having reached record highs around the Island, yet, he notes the price being paid to fishermen hasn't kept up with the expenses over the years, so he is happy the tourism business is working out so well.

Darren and his wife Krista have four children including: Porter, 7, Adriana, 6, Cameron, 4, and 1-year old Charlie.

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in the
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Lawrence MacAulay,
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