

Thibault calls for full review of Digby Neck quarry plans

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Whites Cove

Fisheries Minister Robert Thibault says a proposed rock quarry on Digby Neck would probably result in big changes on land and sea so he's asked for a full environmental assessment of the project.

Global Quarry Products wants to develop a 155-hectare quarry and deepwater marine terminal at Whites Point.

But many Digby Neck residents reject the idea, saying a large quarry would disrupt their lives and possibly ruin the ecosystem.

Residents are pleased with Mr. Thibault's call for a review, which would start with selection of a panel.

"It certainly gives the public a chance for input," said Cheryl Denton, vice-chair of the Partnership for Sustainable Development on Digby Neck and the Islands.

"It's the best possible thing that could happen for our group," she said Wednesday.

A marine terminal would handle bulk carriers from the New York-New Jersey that would be loaded with thousands of tonnes of quarried material. A conveyor would rise 30 metres from the ground and take material out over the water and into the vessels.

The ships wouldn't be able to dock close to land, so three concrete berths would be built to allow them to tie up parallel to the shore in deepwater.

Local fishermen and environmentalists say blasting and quarrying would damage the fishery, harm their quality of life and bring new perils to the Bay of Fundy's endangered whale population.

Fishermen also worry that ballast discharged from ore carriers

might introduce a species of paramecium that caused large-scale shellfish mortality a few years ago off New York and New Jersey.

"Our analysis has determined that the marine terminal portion of the project will interfere substantially with navigation, thereby requiring formal approval under the Navigable Waters Protection Act," Mr. Thibault wrote Environment Minister David Anderson last week.

DFO has concluded that special Fisheries Act permission would likely be needed before anything is done that could harm fish habitat or cause fish mortality.

"The project is also subject to an environmental assessment by the Province of Nova Scotia," said Mr. Thibault, noting the Humber government has expressed interest to DFO in a joint assessment.

"We certainly have to follow an environmental assessment process," said Global project manager Paul Buxton.

"We have been waiting now 5 1/2 months for ... (the) document which would tell us in fact, what we would need to cover in an environmental assessment," Mr. Buxton said Wednesday.

Although Mr. Thibault referred to 155 hectares, the project is now approved only for 3.9 hectares and would need further approval to expand.

"We've done preparatory work on the 3.9 hectares," said Mr. Buxton.

"We've got a full amount of hillside stripped. We've got a sedimentation pond in place, outlet trench with check dam in place.

"We are in fact, in a position now where we could commence operations at the 3.9-hectare site."

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