

June, 21, 2002

Digby Courier
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Re: Proposed Rock Quarry and Shipping Terminal in Digby Neck

I would like to clarify my department's role and involvement in a proposed rock quarry, and potential plans for an associated deep water terminal, near Little River that has been the subject of public concerns recently.

The proponent received provincial approval to operate the 3.9 ha quarry on April 30, 2002. DFO was involved in this review. Through this process, the province agreed to include in its approval a condition that requires the proponent to provide DFO with a blasting design report in advance of any blasting. This condition will verify that the intended charge size and blast design will not have an adverse effect on marine mammals in the area.

Quarry expansion plans may include a deep-water shipping terminal. These plans would be subject to review under the *Fisheries Act* and *Navigable Waters Protection Act* for fish, fish habitat and navigability aspects. If it is determined that a formal authorisation or approval is required under these pieces of legislation, an environmental assessment under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* will be required. In accordance with the environmental assessment process, environmental effects are assessed and the public is provided with an opportunity to comment. During the assessment process, consideration is given to a variety of potential environmental effects, which, in this case, could include impacts to the marine environment, including marine species such as the North Atlantic Right Whale.

Several months ago my department received an initial application for the construction of deep-water piers, however, the proponent later indicated that it would submit a revised proposal for the deep-water terminal. At that time a letter was sent to the proponent indicating that the file would be closed until a revised proposal is received. As of June 18, 2002, DFO had not received a revised proposal. Until we receive a revised proposal for the deep-water terminal, it is premature to speculate what its effects might be on marine mammals and other valued environmental components.

My department has also developed a recovery strategy for the North Atlantic Right Whale and an implementation strategy with concerned stakeholders. The approach is twofold: looking at entanglement with commercial fishing gear and collisions with ships. In implementing the strategy my department is providing funding to support recovery

projects. In addition the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk is providing funding to support stakeholder activities.

In the meantime, my department will continue to ensure the conservation and protection of fish, fish habitat, and safe navigable waters.

Minister Robert Thibault