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NEWS LOCAL

Mayor chides Miller, Walker over reaction to fishing agreement



By Denis Langlois, Sun Times, Owen Sound
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Owen Sound Mayor Deb Haswell

Owen Sound Mayor Deb Haswell says she is confident a new native commercial fishing agreement will not negatively impact the annual Salmon Spectacular derby or the local sports fishery.

"There's enough room and enough fish for everyone," she said Tuesday in an interview. "I don't see tremendous obstacles getting in the way of the Salmon Spectacular at all."

Haswell said she recently convened a meeting with Chippewas of Nawash First Nation Chief Scott Lee, members of the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association and city officials.

The "entire reason," she said, was to get a clearer understanding of the five-year agreement between the provincial government and Saugeen Ojibway Nation that allows commercial fishing to "resume in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay on April 26, 2013, and continue year round over the term of the agreement."

She said news releases and comments from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker and MP Larry Miller that followed the announcement of the agreement were "more sensationalized than they needed to be."

Joint news releases from Walker and Miller, entitled "Sports fishers sold out by MNR" and "Commercial fishing agreement a complete insult" said they had concerns about the implications of the agreement on tourism, the economy and the Salmon Spectacular.

"I am deeply disappointed in learning the details and hidden aspects of this new agreement that will no doubt kill local sport fishing in these bays," Miller said in one release.

Haswell said it is important for "cooler heads to prevail" and that's why she set up a meeting with Lee and the sportsmen's association.

She said the agreement contains measures to protect both the sports and commercial fisheries. She said the city is also aware of the First Nations treaty rights related to fishing in the Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay.

"All of us have an opportunity to fish these waters," she said.

Native commercial fishermen, she said, do not want to hurt the salmon derby.

The meeting, she said, was "very respectful" and will help ensure the lines of communication between the three parties remain open.

The province has said, under the new agreement, both the MNR and SON will monitor commercial fishing and recreational use in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay and will meet in October 2013 to make sure both commercial and recreational anglers can continue to safely coexist while maintaining a sustainable fishery.

According to a background document from the MNR, nets will not be longer than 300 metres and will be marked "in an effective and standard manner that will be communicated to all recreational boaters."

To cut down on catches of trout and salmon — species raised in hatcheries by local sports fishing clubs — nets set in the two bays will have a mesh size of 4.5 inches or greater and have a maximum height of 50 rows of mesh, the MNR says.

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fishallgone

The Mayor needs to look at the declining number and size of fish being caught by "non First Nations" residents. This number is rapidly declining due to Native commercial fishing. When treaties were signed many years ago, they were signed based on the fishing equipment of the times, not the large fishing vessels and massive nets that the First Nations use today. Look at the prize winning Salmon 20 years ago, compared to the prize fish at last years Salmon Spectacular ! Pathetic. TAX PAYING volunteers STOCK our two magnificent bays to support recreational fishing and now we are informed of a new agreement signed last week allowing First Nation fishing year round in the bays which they do not replenish !!!! What the bleep is wrong with this picture !!!! The environmental ramifications will be irreversible. The economic impact will most definitely be felt by The City of Owen Sound and Wiarton when anglers look elsewhere to fish. The Mayor of Owen Sound needs to wake up and smell the fish.....before they are fished out my First Nations,.....for good !!!!!

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