

## **CBC Main Street Interview**

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**Host:** Stephanie Domet

**Guest:** Mark MacLean – Habitat Biologist Fisheries & Oceans Canada

### **Mark MacLean**

This project goes back quite a ways to the late 80s actually when the DFO first received it, at that time it was reviewed by the habitat management program, it was determined there wasn't considered significant fish habitat so the project was allowed to proceed. Now, later on in the development in 2002 the project was brought to our attention again there was a couple of waterfront lots that the Waterfront Development Corporation did not have ownership of and because of that it was identified that the project had to be reviewed again under the fisheries act to concerns for fish habitat and so even though the opinion of DFO hadn't changed at the time some of our some of our, I guess, attitudes towards infilling in Halifax Harbour had changed a bit so in 2002 we did require an environmental assessment for those water lots.

**Stephanie:** When you say significant habitat, what do you mean, what's the criteria?

**Mark MacLean:** Well, we look at if there is any critical fish habitat, sensitive species, nursing rearing areas for any type of fish so we also look at the general area and determine whether or not that a limiting habitat.

**Stephanie:** And what does that mean?

**Mark MacLean:** Well, we'd look at adjacent habitats in the area and determine whether or not this was representative of the whole area of Bedford Basin so for example if there was something that was unique feature that wasn't found elsewhere in Halifax Harbour then that would be something the we'd be considering as sensitive or critical habitat.

**Stephanie:** Now the department did find marine life that's currently under construction why not protect it.

**Mark MacLean:** Well we look at all types of development activities and infill and we always make that assessment to determine the value of that habitat in the context of the marine environment and so in this case what we would look at was, again, whether this was sensitive or critical habitat and its not unique in the sense of we have a good understanding of the different habitat types within Bedford Basin and so this area wasn't sort of deemed as something that was a critical point to save, however one of the things that we do look at under the program is offsetting those losses of productive capacity of fish habitat, so in cases where we do have in fills we do actually look for compensation.

**Stephanie:** And what does that mean, where do you look for compensation?

**Mark MacLean:** Well, we require the proponent to look for projects which would offset the lose of productive capacity so that would be enhancement projects of other fish habitat areas, restoration of degraded fish habitat or creation of new fish habitat.

**Stephanie:** Could those projects be anywhere or would they have to be close by?

**Mark MacLean:** Our preference is to have it in the area where the loss of habitat was happening and certainly restoring the same type of habitat that was lost; it's a hierarchy preference. If that not available, which happens in certain cases, then we have to go looking elsewhere either other locations or other habitat types. We are starting to develop a list of priority habitats in certain areas and focusing in habitat restoration in those priority areas.

**Stephanie:** Some people might see that as trading apples for oranges, I mean if you live in the neighborhood that Mark Currie lives in and you like to take your kids down to check out the marine life there, a project somewhere else isn't really going to help the residence there.

**Mark MacLean:** Ya, and that's why we have that hierarchy, our first, as I said our first preference is, you know, to find habitat nearby that has the same qualities or better qualities than what we are losing so we are actually trying to get a net gain of fish habitat. But in some cases there just doesn't have those opportunities, now when it comes to Halifax Harbour we're getting a lot better in the process of identifying where those potential projects may happen so with some of the other developments that are happening we've actually gone through a mapping of the entire sort of Halifax Harbour and approaches and identifying areas that we can look at you know, increasing the productive capacity of those areas or restoring areas that have been degraded.

**Stephanie:** Mark MacLean, Thanks for speaking with us.