



Pictured above is new owner of O'Healthy Market, Daniel Vanderlans and Manager Laura Vollrath. They are stocking the shelves with new products for the summer months. They are located on 805 Prince Street in Truro. (Submitted)

# Alton Gas – Feedback and Observations

By Lori MacLean

Thanks for sharing your feedback and observations. If I may, there is a lot of information posted on the Alton website regarding engagement with the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. This has included: 2 Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Studies, a third-party independent science review that was led by the Mi'kmaq and activities described in the project's two environmental assessments.

There is more information on this in the Indigenous Relations section of the website, <http://altonnaturalgasstorage.ca/indigenous-relations>. After Alton attempted to pursue other options, we applied to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia for an injunction to ensure we have safe, unobstructed access to our work site.

With respect to public consultation, there is information on this as well on the Alton website, in the FAQ section on Public Consultation. There is also information about public consultation in sections of the two environmental assessments. As well, the project has an active Community Liaison Committee (CLC) that provides feedback on the project's activities. There is more information about the CLC in the Community section of the website.

The public is invited to sign up for Alton Updates from the website such that when the Latest News feed on the site is updated, subscribers get a notice sent to their email.

To offer your readers more information on the project in response to the stories in the June edition, I'm attaching a reply as editorial content.

Lori MacLean is Senior Advisor, Alton Natural Gas Storage Project



This little fawn was safely tucked in next to the basement foundation for a couple days while momma kept a watchful eye from a distance. If you come across a fawn by itself, don't assume it is abandoned. Deer tend to leave their young alone most of the day. (Harrington Photo)

## Letters to the editor



This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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June 20, 2019

Alton Natural Gas Storage and the Shubenacadie

To the Editor:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide readers of The Shoreline Journal with information on the Alton Natural Gas Storage Project, following up on articles in the Journal's June edition. We understand that this project has generated concerns from some people. We appreciate that natural gas storage is new to Nova Scotia, and that there are questions about it. We want to assure readers that Alton is committed to meeting all environmental obligations and to increasing public confidence in this project.

Our starting point has always been clear: Alton can not cause harm to the Shubenacadie River estuary and the fish that live there.

The Alton Natural Gas Storage project is an underground natural gas storage facility that is under development near Stewiacke, NS. To make the natural gas storage caverns, water will be drawn from the tidal Shubenacadie River estuary to dissolve underground salt deposits in a process called brining.

The water is drawn from a constructed channel built alongside the river estuary and is returned as brine to the same channel for release. The salt level in the brine will vary,

depending on the stage of storage cavern construction. At maximum, during the construction of the two planned storage caverns for Alton, about 1,400 metric tonnes of salt will be released in the brine on each tide. That sounds like a lot, but it's a number that needs perspective. Consider that into the Shubenacadie every day, flows 1.47 million metric tonnes of salt on each tide. The amount of salt being added to the river by brining at Alton is much less than one per cent of the river's total amount.

Environmental studies have shown that the slight increase in salinity is insignificant in terms of the natural fluctuation of salinity on each turn of the tide. The tidal Shubenacadie River estuary has a wide range of salinity depending on the tide and rainfall. Every living creature in a tidal river is accustomed to a range of salinity and to how quickly salinity can change.

Within 5 metres of the brine release point in the channel, the brine will be completely mixed with the river water, aided by fast moving currents, the release through thick layers of rock and the injection of air. As correctly stated in the Shoreline Journal's June edition, the brine will dilute rapidly due to the energy and turbulence of the waters in the Shubenacadie that contribute to the

mixing. There is no salt penetration above the head of the tide, and brining will shut down if the natural salinity of the estuary approaches its upper range.

Salinity levels were part of the consideration in the project's Environmental Assessment in 2007, and subsequent studies. Environment and Climate Change Canada is developing a regulation to oversee brine release.

Alton must be in compliance with all federal, provincial and local requirements, including all provisions of the Fisheries Act. The Project has been the subject of considerable review by regulators and expert government departments. In particular, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has said that as designed, and with mitigation in place, the Project is not likely to contravene the fish habitat protection provisions of the Fisheries Act, or the Species at Risk Act. As an extra safeguard, in the spring, brining will shut down completely for 24 days when Striped bass are spawning, a further protection for Striped bass eggs and fish in the Shubenacadie.

Alton was the subject of an independent science review led by the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Information on that review is available on the Alton website. Alton accepted all of the recommendations from that review. The review fo-

cus on assessing potential impacts of Alton on fish and fish habitat of the Shubenacadie estuary.

One of the outcomes of the review was the development of fish fact sheets for Alton summarizing years of research on species of interest in the Shubenacadie. Twenty species, representing all levels of the food web, are profiled in the fact sheets including Atlantic salmon, Striped bass, Atlantic tomcod, Atlantic sturgeon and American eel. The fact sheets are available on the Alton website.

For Alton, more than a decade of research and monitoring of the Shubenacadie has been conducted by scientists at Dalhousie University, the most extensive study of the river to date. Results of this program including Striped bass data are shared regularly with government and regulators, and information is also posted about it publicly on the Alton website. Furthermore, river research has been expert peer reviewed and published.

Part of the research has included salinity study on Striped bass, the iconic fish of the Shubenacadie.

Results from that study are also available on the Alton website.

Nova Scotia's energy mix is changing, and natural gas plays an increasingly important role.

It helps power our businesses and warms our homes – all while lowering emissions by displacing higher carbon fuels like fuel oil and coal. In fact, many of the province's largest employers use natural gas every day to fuel their work, as do industries and public institutions like hospitals and universities plus thousands of homeowners. With Nova Scotia's remaining supply of offshore natural gas shut down last year, access to a reliable source of natural gas during the winter is important to keep energy costs affordable.

Safe, economical and reliable natural gas stored deep underground at Alton is a part of the solution.

We recognize the Shubenacadie River estuary is at the centre of Nova Scotia's history, culture and geography. As a member of the river community, we take our duty to operate responsibly very seriously.

We are committed to continuing to work with local Mi'kmaq communities and engage with our neighbours, partners and all levels of government to progress the Alton project.

Sincerely,  
Lori MacLean  
Senior Advisor

Alton Natural Gas Storage Project

## PHOTO CONTEST

The Shoreline Journal is conducting a photo contest for the best photos along the Shore from Truro to Advocate.

### \$500 in Prizes

\$125 prize for each of four categories:

Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall.

- 1st - \$50;
- 2nd - \$35;
- 3rd - \$20;
- 4th - \$15;

Honourable Mention, \$5.

Take photos of each season. Submissions to be made in December 2019.

Judging and awards in January, 2020.

Complete rules and submission details announced in September.

Contact: Maurice Rees: [maurice@theshorelinejournal.com](mailto:maurice@theshorelinejournal.com)

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