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## FIRST ONE IN THE WORLD

Massive closed-containment tank is in the water

*Thursday, January 13, 2011*

**Dan MacLennan**

In the world of closed containment aquaculture, it appears size matters. Never was that more true in the Campbell River area than in the past few weeks as a massive floating solid-wall tank was built on the waterfront by the Agrimarine Industries/Middle Bay Sustainable Aquaculture Institute (MBSAI) partnership.

"It feels wonderful," laughed Robert Walker, vice president for Agrimarine Industries, at the Middle Bay site Wednesday. "It has been a very long time and it's exciting to see it. This is the first one in the world and we're very much looking forward to getting fish in it."

After years of design, government approval, funding efforts and redesign, sections of the gargantuan fibreglass tank were assembled on site in the last two weeks. The 3,000-cubic-metre tank has a 24-metre inside diameter and a depth of almost nine metres. At press time yesterday, the plan called for the tank to be towed into place and filled with seawater by the afternoon.

"We hope to have fish in the water within the next two weeks," Walker said. "There are no other hard-walled tanks of this capacity. We've designed it to address many of the problems that currently exist with the net-cage industry. We hope to have a working system very shortly and be able to demonstrate that we have a solution here."

The challenge facing closed-containment proponents is getting operating costs into the same range as those of open-net ocean fish farms. The aquaculture industry has long argued closed containment is too costly, but Walker is out to prove that contention wrong.

The first phase of the Middle Bay Sustainable Aquaculture project will see 50,000 young 45-gram chinook added to the tank and raised to the four kilo range over an 18-month period. Walker is hoping the next three phases will follow quickly.



Eric Joseph, top centre, is dwarfed by the new closed-containment tank built at Middle Bay north of Campbell River as he works on one of the massive tank's overflow ports. The Middle Bay Sustainable Aquaculture Institute and partners Agrimarine Industries hope to have 50,000 young chinook salmon swimming in the tank within two weeks. Quadra Island can be seen in the distance.

Photo: Dan MacLennan

"We'll order the second tank almost immediately," he said. "By the end of May, perhaps, we'll have the second tank in the water and hopefully tanks three and four by the end of the summer." Tank two will be same size as tank one, but tanks three and four will be even larger. Each will be 30-metres in diameter with a 5,500-cubic-metre capacity.

MBSAI is a not-for-profit organization formed for the purpose of researching and developing the use of commercial-scale solid wall containment systems for aquaculture.

Funding has come from the Coast Sustainability Trust, the US-based Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the federal government's Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

The total cost of the project is in the millions of dollars, but Walker didn't want to attach a specific figure Wednesday.