

## Irving Oil set to study tidal power

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ST. ANDREWS - New Brunswick took its first big step in creating electricity through the high tides of the Bay of Fundy when it announced Monday that a study will be done to examine the feasibility of tidal power in 11 different locations in the bay.

Irving Oil was given approval from the provincial government to lease Crown lands for a two-year study.

The oil company has partnered with a group of scientists at the Huntsman Marine Science Centre in St. Andrews to look at what effect tidal power would have on aquatic life, and commercial industry on the bay, and to study the tidal patterns and climatic conditions to determine which of the 11 areas are best able to harness tidal energy.

The scientists will be using technology that takes photos and videos and samples from 11 areas in Head Harbour Passage, Western Passage areas of Passamaquoddy Bay, the Cape Enrage area near Chignecto Bay and the Cape Spencer area near Saint John.

Jeff Landry, manager of business development for Irving Oil, said the company has decided to spend up to \$600,000 to see if it is possible to incorporate renewable energy into the business because it is what the public wants.

"It's been about a year and a half since we went to the community about a second oil refinery in Saint John. At the time people were receptive but they let us know they expected our company to set a new environmental performance standard and suggested integration of a renewable form of energy into the proposed second refinery," said Landry.

Landry said the company's president Kenneth Irving has said there is a role in the world for an oil company that is committed to the environment.

David Thompson, Fundy Bay-keeper with the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, said while the organization is in favour of renewable forms of energy and is interested in the tidal power study, it wishes there were more partners on the project.

"Obviously the company wants to see some tidal power projects go ahead and hopefully some will," said Thompson. "Hopefully it is not being done merely as a way to green-wash the large energy projects that are going ahead."

Thompson said he thinks there is room for some small-scale tidal power operations in the bay but the energy created should take the place of other environmentally damaging projects instead of simply creating more energy.

"We will be watching this very closely," said Thompson.

While New Brunswick is taking a step towards tidal power it is still lagging behind the work being done in the Nova Scotia area of the Bay of Fundy.

In 2006 the California-based Electric Power Research Institute did a study that examined the tidal potential in eight locations in the Bay of Fundy and found Head Harbour Passage in New Brunswick and Minas Passage in Nova Scotia were the best places to set up test sites.

In January, Nova Scotia's provincial government announced it was hoping to become a world leader in tidal power by allowing three companies to set up multimillion-dollar test centres in the Minas Basin.

Energy Minister Jack Keir said with tidal power technologies still being developed and tested, tidal power is still a long way from becoming a reality.

"It's not a race," said Keir. "We don't believe we are behind but we are taking due diligence because we want to make sure we do it right, not quick."

Landry said after the two-year study is completed and it is determined if tidal power is economically and environmentally possible it will be up to the province to grant approval for a test site.