



Prince Edward

The 820i®, CW-80 and BenchMark™ land the big catch

GERALD SULLIVAN, PRESIDENT of Mari-Tech Scales & Food Equipment Inc. in Nova Scotia, along with co-owner Stewart Greig, have been Rice Lake distributors since they launched the company 11 years ago. Gerald is taking us to see Rice Lake equipment applications on Prince Edward Island.

There is only one way to get there, and that's the beautiful Confederation Bridge that spans the Northumberland Strait, linking Prince Edward Island with mainland New Brunswick. The 12.9 kilometer (8 mile) long multi-span post-tensioned concrete box girder structure took 5,000 laborers four years and \$1.3 billion to build. The grand opening in 1997 was a Canadian national celebration.

The estimated lifespan of the bridge is 100 years or more. The rock-filled causeway that was originally proposed would not have lasted long in this passage. The Canadian Hydrographic Service estimates that tidal currents through a gap in such a causeway would be in excess of 18 knots (33.3 km/h/20.7 mph). That's powerful enough to counter most commercial ships and sweep away house-sized boulders. The Northumberland Strait is also ruled by an extremely complex tidal regime. The tidal cycles on each side of such a causeway would be placed at opposites to each other.

The sheer size and weight of the components required strengthening the soil base at the staging facility. A crawler transport system was used to move pieces from fabrication to storage, and onto a nearby pier. The Danish-built heavy-lift catamaran, the *HLV Svanen*, was brought in to place the components in the Strait. What a sight that must have been. The *Svanen* was, and would still be, the tallest man-made structure on this windswept province.

Borden-Carleton

THE CONFEDERATION COVE MUSSEL COMPANY LTD. — CCMC is conveniently located at the island foot of Confederation Bridge, on the site of the old ferry landing in Bor-



Gerald Sullivan

den-Carleton. CCMC processes one quarter, or approximately 9,000,000 pounds, of the island's annual mussel harvest. They buy from 50 mussel farms surrounding Prince Edward Island, where cultured mussels are grown in mesh socks that are suspended from backlines (ropes) in the water. These ropes are anchored at the bottom and suspended using plastic buoys for floats. It takes one year for the "spat" to reach market size. Then the ropes are pulled into the boat with a winch and pulley, and the mussel-filled socks are removed. (Unlike wild fishery, mussel farming is environmentally friendly; they do not drag the ocean floor to harvest mussels.)

The Northumberland Strait is one of the most productive marine environments in the world, especially for mussels. The quality of water the mussels inhabit makes all the difference in the taste, and Prince Edward Island Blue Mussels are said to be the sweetest-tasting mussels in the world.

A mussel filters ten to fifteen gallons of seawater a day to extract plankton for nutrients, which in turn improves the coastal water quality. No feed or chemicals are used as with other forms of aquaculture. These same tidal waters that can move house-sized boulders also constantly replenish the food supply mussels need to taste sweet and grow to market size.

Island

Len Currie, CCMC general manager, says each island cove produces mussels with a distinctive flavor. “We do all we can to preserve that natural flavor, so we can’t afford to have any part of our process or equipment break or slow down. Our fresh mussels are shipped out every day. We hold our mussels in their natural environment until the orders are received. Only after receiving the order will the processing and packing begin. This gives our customers the freshest quality with minimum order lead time.”

Customers can also order their mussels frozen. First they must be blanched to 160 degrees, a process that releases the meat from the shell. Some customers want their order completely cooked (to 180 degrees) before being flash frozen.

Len observes, “Since being introduced to Rice Lake equipment it has become the standard to which we measure the performance, user-friendliness and serviceability of other equipment in our plant.” And Mari-Tech? “Mari-Tech continues to be the leader in addressing our equipment or service needs.”

CCMC uses Rice Lake’s CW-80 Checkweigher throughout their operation and especially in their quality assurance lab to verify the yield of meat from each batch. First the raw test mussels are weighed. Then the mussels are removed from the shells and weighed again. After the weighing, the technician sautéed the mussels in butter and we conducted a taste test. Sweet! ■

The Loonie flies.

Through recent history Canadians needed C\$1.61 in “loonies” (nicknamed after the bird on the Canadian dollar coin) to buy one U.S. “greenback.” Last September the Canadian dollar crossed a symbolic threshold and overtook the American counterpart in value for the first time since 1976. To Canadians, the achievement of fiscal parity was likened to winning the Stanley Cup.



Mesh socks filled with mature mussels. Len Currie, CCMC general manager, holding the sweetest mussels in the world. CW-80 Checkweigher is used to verify accuracy of package-filling equipment.

Tignish

Tignish is a small fishing village located at the rocky and rugged northeastern tip of Prince Edward Island and is said to be the windiest spot in all of Canada, as attested to by the wind farms along the way.

Any scale equipment in this environment takes a lot of abuse and severe weather. Crab pots weighing three to four hundred pounds are carefully placed, but sometimes dropped, on the scale platform, along with fish slime and ocean brine.

Jeff Hogan, weigh master at the L&S buying station, says, “The scale program was designed by Mari-Tech and written by Rice Lake. It was easy to learn and the Rice Lake 820i™ controller and BenchMark™ scale system is accurate and dependable.” The scale system is the cash register for hundreds of private fishing boats arriving with payloads of lobster, crab, mackerel and tuna. When you consider it can take a 20-hour fight to land a 1,400-pound Blue Fin that brings \$18 a pound, you want every ounce recorded and accounted for.

Gerald tells us that the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has also contributed to his busy schedule. “In order to keep better track of quotas, the DFO gave these buying stations two weeks to install Legal-for-Trade weighing equipment that would display and record individual weight, and accumulate weight totals for each fishing license. Some of the docks got reprieves, but eventually every buying station will need traceable weighing equipment.”

Gerald gives credit to Rice Lake’s inside sales department for helping him meet promised delivery dates. “Wendy Carlson has been a shining star to us at Mari-Tech,” in Gerald’s estimation. “She never lets us down. She never says ‘That will take two weeks.’ She says, ‘That would normally take two weeks, but I’ll see what I can do to get a better ship date.’ Once, I ordered online five cases of CW-80s and mistakenly asked for UPS™ Ground. Wendy called to tell me it would be better to put the order on a pallet



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and send it freight forward. She has saved Mari-Tech money many, many times.”

Wendy Carlson, who has been with Rice Lake 15 years, says, “Gerald and the gang at Mari-Tech are great to work with. Getting Gerald’s equipment shipped by the most economical method is just part of my job. We know how important it is to Mari-Tech to get their order when they need it, especially if they are in a critical season on products such as seafood. We always strive for the best ship date if an item is not in stock. From the time the order is placed, through the manufacturing process and shipping, we all know the customer’s urgency.” ■



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