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Spring 2012

## The Lobster Bulletin, Spring 2012

Lobster Institute, University of Maine

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Spring 2012

*“News, research updates, and information on lobsters and the lobster industry.”*

Published by the Lobster Institute

“Protecting and conserving the lobster resource, and enhancing lobstering as an industry...and a way of life.”

**Lobster Institute’s 2012**  
  
**Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting**  
**Attracts over 100**

Over 100 lobstermen and other industry members from both Canada and the United States gathered at the DoubleTree Hotel in Portland, Maine on March 23 & 24 for the Lobster Institute’s ninth annual Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting. The Town Meeting is designed as an industry-wide gathering of lobstermen, lobster dealers and distributors, scientists and other interested parties coming together to discuss topics of direct concern to the fishery and the lobster industry.

The over-arching topic for the 2012 Town Meeting was “The Lobster Fishery: Co-Existing in the Marine Environment.” Over the course of the day and a half meeting, attendees discussed such topics as bait safety, marine debris, whale take reduction, co-existing with aquaculture, and offshore energy. Additionally, by special request, a session was devoted to discussions on methods of entering and exiting the fishery in various regions; led by a panel of lobstermen from Grand Manan, Maine, Massachusetts, and Prince Edward Island.

As is characteristic of the Town Meeting, there was time allotted to allow fishermen the opportunity to share their thoughts, insights, and concerns – and to bring up any topic of particular personal interest. It was noted in some evaluations following the event that this part of the Town Meeting is a hallmark of this gathering, and with such a full agenda they wished there had been more time for open discussion. The Lobster Institute has pledged to make sure that happens in 2013 – when they celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting.

As the event concluded, attendees broke out into smaller groups for conversation on key action items they would like to see emerge from the days’ dialogue. Dozens of items were discussed, and recorded. Each group then reported on these items to the group as a

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**Darden Restaurants to Establish a**  
**“Lobster Farm” in Malaysia**

Sandra Pendicini of the *Orlando Sentinel* reported in April that Darden Restaurants, the parent company of Red Lobster, Olive Garden and several other restaurant chains, has initiated a project to develop a “lobster farm” in Malaysia. This aquaculture endeavor would be designed to raise spiny lobsters (*Palinuridae*), not the American lobster (*Homarus americanus*).

Darden representatives reported to Pendicini that the farm would encompass 23,000 acres and the target is to produce as much as 40,000,000 pounds of lobster annually. Cost of this project would be roughly \$650 million.

The length of growout time plus the costs in feed and energy to maintain tanks have been barriers to successful commercial lobster aquaculture initiatives in the past. For *Homarus americanus*, there is the additional problem of lobsters in close quarters damaging one-another with their large claws, a feature not present in spiny lobsters. For these reasons, among others there currently are no major commercial lobster aquaculture efforts taking place. Estimates are it could be 2029 before the Darden farm is fully operational. At that point it could employ thousands of local people. ☘

The **Lobster Bulletin**  
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**LOBSTER INSTITUTE**

5763 Rogers Hall, Room #210  
The University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469-5763  
Phone: 207-581-2751 Fax: 207-581-2744  
[www.lobsterinstitute.org](http://www.lobsterinstitute.org)

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A member of the University of Maine System  
Cathy Billings, Editor [cathy.billings@umit.maine.edu](mailto:cathy.billings@umit.maine.edu)

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## Lobster Science Sustainability Workshop

The Atlantic Lobster Sustainability Foundation is hosting a Lobster Science Sustainability Workshop on July 24-15 in Moncton, NB, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Special guest speakers will be Dr. Andrew Jeffs of the University of Auckland and Mr. David Smith of Sobey's supermarkets. For more information or registration, call 506-533-6341 or visit [www.lobstersustainability.ca](http://www.lobstersustainability.ca) ☼

### Town Meeting

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whole. The following are four items attendees noted most frequently upon which they would like to see more research and/or outreach actions taken:

- Addressing the issue of "quality vs. quantity", including training on proper handling of lobsters and how attention to quality can result in a better price to the harvester.
- Pollution, pesticides and overall water quality remain high on the list of priorities, as they have each year of the nine years the Town Meeting has been held.
- Bait quality, safety and availability are a most pressing issue.
- Successful marketing and equitable pricing remain topics of interest as they have the past 4 years. Suggestion of a unified effort involving all sectors of the industry.

The Lobster Institute will do its best to encourage, facilitate or take direct action on these items as funding and collaborations allow.

A full list of suggested action items will soon be available from the Lobster Institute on their Web site. Additionally and as always, the Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meeting was recorded and the Lobster Institute will make an MP3 or written reports available to interested parties. In addition, a summary report and full transcript will be made available on the Lobster Institute's Web site at [www.lobsterinstitute.org](http://www.lobsterinstitute.org) as soon as they are compiled. For more information, people can contact Deb Seekins at 207-581-1443 or [deb.seekins@umit.maine.edu](mailto:deb.seekins@umit.maine.edu).

Darden Restaurants and Orion Seafood International were recognized at the meeting as the primary event sponsors. Fisheries Products International/High Liner Foods was also recognized for their continuous sponsorship of the reception held in conjunction with the Town Meeting. Other sponsors acknowledged included: Downeast Lobstermen's Association, East Coast Seafood/Paturel International, Maine Import/Export Lobster Dealers Association, and Riverdale Mills. ☼

### National Seafood Marketing Coalition Addresses U.S. Senate

Members of the National Seafood Marketing Coalition (NSMC) were invited to brief the U.S. Senate Oceans Caucus on the subject of "Seafood Jobs in America". The briefing was held on the afternoon of March 29<sup>th</sup>, in the U.S. Senate Energy Committee room. The director of the NSMC, Bruce Schactler, led a panel of economists and representatives from the seafood industry. The discussion highlighted the contribution of jobs and economic value from seafood nationwide, the effect of global market competition, and opportunities and challenges the seafood industry faces in increasing U.S. seafood jobs and value. Dane Somers of the Maine Lobster Promotion Council is a member of the Coalition and shared remarks. Use the link below to access the entire presentation (1 hour):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5dfixn7W00>. ☼



### Lobster Science Symposium Planned for November

An international steering, headed by Maine Sea Grant, UMaine and UPEI, is coordinating a symposium to be held November 27-30. *The American Lobster in a Changing Ecosystem: A US-Canada Science Symposium*, will take place at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, ME. As it develops, information about registration, agendas, and speakers will be posted at <http://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/lobster-symposium>, on the Maine Sea Grant Web site. According to organizers, "Fundamental changes have occurred over the past few decades in the climate and food web of the Northwest Atlantic, as well as the economics of fishing. After decades of relative stability in the fishery, we need to improve our understanding of *Homarus americanus* in the context of its changing environment. The symposium will be a forum for new findings, aiming to identify region-wide research gaps and priorities, and catalyze new research collaborations."



**As a Non-profit, the Lobster Institute relies on industry and private support to continue its work for and with the lobster fishery. Please consider donating as a Friend of the Lobster Institute today. Call 207-581-2751 or visit [www.lobsterinstitute.org](http://www.lobsterinstitute.org)**





Contact us at 207-581-2751 if you would like to sponsor our "Research Report" and see your logo here!

# RESEARCH REPORT

*Readers may contact the Lobster Institute for more detailed information on any of these projects.*

- **Warm Water Affecting Lobsters** – The winter's warm air temperatures have helped drive up water temperatures in the Gulf of Maine, in line with a continuing trend. For lobsters, the warmer temperatures could mean they molt their shells and make their annual trek from offshore to inshore waters earlier in the year. Additionally, ocean algae could bloom ahead of schedule.

Temperature affects all life processes, but it's too soon to say if changes brought on by rising water temperatures will be good or bad in the long run, said Jeffrey Runge, a biological oceanographer at the University of Maine and a researcher at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland. "Higher temperature means higher growth rates, but it also means they require more food in order to attain those higher growth rates," he said. "But whether there'll be more food around, I don't know." If the waters keep heating up, some scientists speculate that a plankton species, *Calanus finmarchicus*, which is a key prey for herring, mackerel, right whales and other forage species, could diminish or even disappear from the Gulf of Maine.

In the long run are questions around how rising ocean temperatures might affect the growth and reproduction cycles and distribution of fish and shellfish, whales, zooplankton and other marine life throughout the gulf. And there are questions on ripple effects. For instance, warm water could result in shrimp eggs hatching earlier than in the past. But the hatching dates could come before the phytoplankton bloom that shrimp larvae feed upon. "These are all angles that you'd need to look into to determine what the effects are going to be," said Dave Townsend, an oceanographer at UMaine. Air temperatures in Portland, Maine have been well above normal for seven consecutive months, and April's regional warm spells shattered temperature records across Maine for days in a row. Warm temperatures can also be found in the ocean. On March 30, at the tail end of a warm streak, the surface water at a buoy in Casco Bay near Portland came in at 45.5 degrees — or roughly 6 to 10 degrees higher than the same date in any of the past 10 years. At another buoy in Penobscot Bay, off the state's midcoast, the water temperature was 3 to 9

degrees warmer than readings in the past decade. The Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal and Observing Systems monitors a series of buoys throughout the Gulf of Maine, which stretches from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia. The association collects data on water and air temperatures, wind speed and direction, wave height, and salinity levels. Water temperatures have been increasing in recent years at all buoys and at all water depths, said Ru Morrison, executive director of NERACOOS, based in Rye, N.H. "It's warming everywhere, at slightly different rates," he said.

*(Excerpted from The Gloucester Times, April 2, 2012)*

- **Steneck participates in Task Force on Global Fishing** – According to a University of Maine press release, marine scientist Robert Steneck is a member of a task force that recently announced a recommendation to halve global fishing for crucial prey species such as herring, anchovy and other species known as forage fish. The Lenfest Forage Fish Task Force released on April 1 its report, "Little Fish, Big Impact: Managing a crucial link in ocean food webs." According to a news release from the Pew Charitable Trusts, which manages the Lenfest Ocean Program, the report concluded that in most ecosystems at least twice as many of these species should be left in the ocean as conventional practice. Forage fish are small schooling fish that are a crucial link in ocean food webs because they eat tiny plants and animals, called plankton, and are preyed upon by animals such as penguins, whales, seals, puffins and dolphins. They are also primary food sources for many commercially and recreationally valuable fish found around North America, such as the Maine lobster (as bait), salmon, tuna, striped bass, and cod. The task force estimated that globally, forage fish are twice as valuable in the water as in a net — contributing \$11.3 billion by serving as food for other commercially important fish. This is more than double the \$5.6 billion they generate as direct catch.

Made up of 13 preeminent scientists with expertise in a wide range of disciplines, the Lenfest Forage Fish Task Force was established to generate specific and practical advice to support better management of forage fish around the world. ❧



## **LOBSTER INSTITUTE**

*Lobster Bulletin*, Spring 2012

### **Lobster Institute's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations Continue**

The Lobster Institute is marking its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1987-2012) with a series of celebrations throughout the year. The latest celebrations were held at the Maine Fishermen's Forum on March 3, when the Institute had a special session at the Forum dedicated to reviewing milestones in research and outreach from throughout its history, with remarks and anecdotes shared by industry leaders and volunteers. Jim Knott of Riverdale Mills noted that, "It was the Lobster Institute that first brought science to the lobster industry."

The event was highlighted by a presentation by Patrice McCarron of a commemorative plaque to Dr. Bob Bayer, which reads, "In recognition of 25 years of service to the lobster industry. 1987-2012 With appreciation from the Maine Lobstermen's Association."



*Bill Adler (l) and Dr. Bob Bayer (r) present the Lobster Institute's Industry Partner Award to Dana Rice (c)*

An additional celebration was held at the Lobster Institute's Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meeting on March 23. A focal point of the event was the presentation to Dana Rice of the Institute's "Industry Partner Award". The award is presented, "In appreciation for being an outstanding Lobster Institute volunteer and supporter who has greatly contributed to advancing the Institute's mission of protecting, conserving, and enhancing the lobster resource and lobstering as an industry." Rice, of D.B. Rice Fisheries in Bunker's Harbor, Maine has been a member of the Lobster Institute's Board of Advisors for over 2 decades, is a long-time lobster research volunteer, and was a leader in the Institute's C.O.R.E. Campaign. It was Rice who came up with the concept for the Canadian/U.S. Town Meeting back in 2004.

The Institute will also have a more formal celebration for its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the University of Maine campus in September. Look for information on this and other anniversary events in future editions of the *Lobster Bulletin*.



*Cakes similar to the one above have been shared at all Lobster Institute 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations to-date.*