Maine Lobster Promotion Council

Today almost everyone with young children is familiar with South Korean pop star Psy’s musical hit “Gangnam Style.” In a June visit to Maine, four South Korean chefs were excited to learn about lobster “Maine style.” Their visit was the result of a joint effort between Maine Lobster Promotion Council and Calendar Islands Maine Lobster to create an effective educational program for international buyers.

The chefs had a hands-on education in everything lobster, from pulling traps and shucking lobster in a processing plant to preparing lobster with several top Maine chefs. MLA’s director, Patrice McCarron, presented an overview of the lobster industry, highlighting conservation and quality measures. They learned all about what makes Maine lobster great, including our sustainable resource management, our beautiful coastal environment and our handling techniques.

In a cooperative promotional effort, dealers and processors opened their facilities to the chefs to provide a good overview of the industry. The chefs covered most of the coast, hitting Seaview Lobster in Kittery, Ready Lobster in Portland, Shucks Maine Lobster in Richmond, Linda Beans Perfect Maine in Rockland, Vinalhaven Lobster Co-op, Greenhead Lobster in Stonington and Garbo Lobster in Hancock. They even stopped in Augusta to meet Governor LePage.

The companies taking part in this new educational program recognize that South Korea represents a good opportunity for Maine lobster to enter into a new market because of the country’s expanding economy and relatively high per capita seafood consumption (126.5 pounds per year live weight). The Maine International Trade Center reports that exports

Continued on page 14

EASTERN NEW BRUNSWICK: SIMILAR FISHERIES, FEARS

By Annie Tselikis

When you are invited to attend a meeting in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick, a seven-and-a-half-hour drive from southern Maine, it makes sense to do as much as you can while you’re in the area. Jean Lavallée of Aquatic Science and Health Services in Prince Edward Island is the preeminent researcher on lobster veterinary science. I had wanted to attend his full Product Quality and Handling training session for several months. So when he invited me to a June session that was “close by” (meaning not in Cape Breton or Newfoundland), I thought my chance might not come again. To take full advantage of the trip, I also added a meeting with the Maritime Fishermen’s Union (MFU), the MLA’s counterpart in the Canadian Maritimes, and a tour of one of the many area processing plants.

After you exit Route 11 in Shediac and wind your way toward Main Street, past the giant lobster sculpture, lobster restaurants, and numerous signs proclaiming the town the Lobster Capital of the World, you eventually will find the MFU office, located in an old yellow building just outside of the downtown area.

MFU organizer Michel Richard welcomed me into the office. At 43, Michel has served the MFU for the last eleven years. We talked about our respective organizations, and the differences and similarities in the lobster fisheries, and I quickly realized that he is deeply passionate about his job and the industry he serves.

MFU has members in Canadian Lobster Fishing Areas (LFAs) 23, 25 and 26, which range from northeast New Brunswick through the Northumberland Strait to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and LFA 34 in southwest Nova Scotia. Each LFA has a distinct fishing season.

Continued on page 17

SOUTH KOREAN CHEFS LEARN ALL ABOUT MAINE LOBSTER

The South Korean chefs went lobstering, visited a processing facility and, of course, enjoyed sampling many Maine lobsters. Here with the chefs, from left to right, are Marianne Lacroix, MLPC; John Jordan and Emily Lane, Calendar Islands Maine Lobster. Photo courtesy of MLPC.
As tourists flock to Maine's quiet coastal towns and Maine's lobster fleet gets busy with the summer shed, we remember again the importance of the state's lobster industry. The livelihoods of so many people are dependent upon the continued sustainability and profitability of the lobstermen and the dealers and processors who rely on them. Maine's ever increasing lobster landings have been both a blessing and a curse. In today's world, sustainable commercial fisheries are rare, and record catches even more so. In the years following the world-wide recession of 2008, the U.S. and Canada have increased lobster supply by more than 40% and landed in excess of 300 million pounds last year. Dealers and processors have had to develop new customers to buy the additional 90 million pounds of lobster coming into the supply chain. The good news is that it was all sold, and we have new customers enjoying those 90 million pounds of lobster. The bad news is the lower prices paid to the boats and shrinking profit margins for many lobstermen. By all indications, the spring lobster season in Canada this year is hot again, with reports of extremely strong landings and weak prices. Their season set the stage for Maine's lobstermen, who are once again experiencing historically weak prices this spring. Sadly, the availability of the lower-priced Canadian lobsters dragged down the higher prices that are typically paid for Maine lobsters landed in the spring. State leaders clearly understand the critical situation facing the lobster industry, and how much rides on the industry's continued success. The Legislature approved a new law which will raise $2.25 million to build demand for Maine lobster. Even Governor LePage, who has staunchly opposed any new fees and taxes, understands the value of this investment and signed the bill into law. The Maine Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher announced that he will hold four meetings with the lobster industry in July to discuss and share information about what is happening in Maine and Canada and to brainstorm about the future. The schedule is featured in the Landings calendar. This issue of Landings touches on many of the important issues facing the lobster industry and the coastal communities whose economies depend on it. This month we begin a new series, 'From Trap to Plate,’ exploring the range of tools used to sell lobsters, some of which could stabilize or add clarity about how boat prices are determined. This month’s article explores the early history of the Portland Fish Exchange as a public auction and the concept of forward contracting — setting prices in advance — in Maine's lobster industry. Touching on the competitive relationship between the U.S. and Canadian lobster fisheries, Landings explores the ongoing Canada-EU trade negotiations. Given the close connection between the U.S. and Canadian lobster fisheries, the status of this trade agreement will have a significant impact on Maine's industry. Landings also offers insight into what the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will mean for Maine's lobstermen. This issue features a guest column by Kevin Lewis, the director of the new Maine Community Health Options, who explains what the ACA is setting out to achieve. And this month’s ‘Steaming Ahead’ column in the MLA pages explores how this law could affect lobstermen. Landings will continue to probe deeper into the health insurance law in future issues. But all is not doom and gloom along the coast. In this issue, we also highlight some of the excitement generated by Maine lobster. In June, a group of renowned chefs from high-end hotels and a major food buyer from South Korea toured the Maine coast, visiting lobster-buying stations and processing plants, and taking a trip aboard a Maine lobster boat. The visitors saw the beauty of Maine and learned the story of Maine lobstermen’s long-standing conservation measures. Maine lobster exports to South Korea more than doubled from 2011 to 2012, reaching a value of $1.5 million, according to data from the Maine International Trade Center. Summer-time means tourists in Maine. Landings visits a few of Maine's eco-based tourism operations, which introduce our visitors to lobsters and other marine species right out on the water. Plus readers will get to know a few more of the special people along the coast, including a lobsterman who is still going strong at age 91, and Janice Plante, a wonderful and gifted reporter who works at Commercial Fisheries News. It’s summer and the living is supposed to be easy. And for many who visit this state, it is. For Maine's lobstermen, dealers and processors, however, the season promises hard work, good landings, and important discussions about where the industry is headed. Landings will continue to keep you on top of the complexity and the joy of this part of Maine's economy.
By Melissa Waterman

Signs of the Seasons is a citizen science program that engages children and adults in science through observation of plant and animal phenology. What is phenology? It is the study of the seasonal timing of recurring life events, such as animal migrations, insect metamorphoses and foliage changes. Many of these “signs of the seasons” have shifted as a result of a changing climate. Observation of what is happening and when in one’s backyard or local park helps scientists and managers answer questions that affect Maine’s forests, crops, and day-to-day lives.

"Fishermen and farmers understand the timing of life cycles of plants and animals,” said Esperanza Stancioff, climate change educator for University of Maine Cooperative Extension/Maine Sea Grant program and co-coordinator of the program with Beth Bisson of Maine Sea Grant. “It is a part of their daily lives to observe and note changes. For example, lobstermen know when the lobsters generally shed. Maine lobstermen were shocked last year to find lobsters shedding their shells in late spring, earlier than had been seen in recent history.

The answers to these two questions have implications for the availability of fresh water, the match between pollinators and flowering of wild and crop plants, the availability of food for migrating birds, and even the length of Maine’s tourist season. "We’re trying to make the link for people, so they understand how these plants and animals are affected by increased temperature or extreme rainfall,” said Stancioff.

Program participants range from Don Julio tequila-prey relationships becoming mismatched? The answers to these questions have implications for the timing of maple syrup tapping, the available supply of fresh water, the match between pollinators and flowering of wild and crop plants, the availability of food for migrating birds, and even the length of Maine’s tourist season. "We’re trying to make the link for people, so they understand how these plants and animals are affected by increased temperature or extreme rainfall,” said Stancioff.

Participants make notes on the timing of certain natural events, like the appearance of Monarch butterflies or the first blooms of the beach rose. Photo by Beth Bisson, Maine Sea Grant.

By Annie Tselikis

The Lobster Roll Rumble is part food industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out event is a part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge. The sold-out Lobster Roll Rumble is part incredible industry trade show, part incredible cocktail party. And it’s huge.

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GUEST COLUMN: What is the Affordable Care Act?

Over the next several issues we will be featuring a series of articles on the new Affordable Care Act which goes into effect in January, 2014, and its implications for Maine’s lobstermen.

By Kevin Lewis
Executive Director
Maine Community Health Options

Anyone paying the escalating costs of insurance premiums knows the challenge of affording insurance coverage, particularly in the individual and small group markets. To maintain affordability, many people in Maine have resorted to high-deductible plans with increasingly limited coverage. Fortunately, new health insurance options are coming this fall for those who purchase health insurance either as a small group or as an individual (whether for single or family coverage), and for those who currently have no health insurance.

These new plan offerings are a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the establishment of a Health Insurance Marketplace, and the entrance of new Qualified Health Plans within this Marketplace, including Maine Community Health Options.

The ACA created a new type of non-profit health insurer, called a Consumer Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OP). These insurers are run by their customers. CO-OPs are meant to offer consumer-friendly, affordable health insurance options to individuals and small businesses. In Maine, Maine Community Health Options has been established as a non-profit insurance CO-OP in order to provide Maine residents with better health insurance coverage solutions.

In a CO-OP, customers’ health insurance needs and concerns are a top priority because they themselves elect the CO-OP’s board of directors, a majority of whom must be CO-OP customers themselves. CO-OPs such as Maine Community Health Options must use any profits to lower premiums, improve benefits, or improve the quality of members’ health care.

Change couldn’t come soon enough: today, nearly 50 million Americans are uninsured and an immeasurable number are underinsured. The ACA seeks to address access and availability of affordable and meaningful insurance coverage in a comprehensive way. The ACA includes sweeping reforms that protect consumers, create transparency in insurance company rate-setting, and establish minimum standards for coverage for all health insurance products so that people can count on their coverage when they need it.

In Maine, many ACA consumer protections have already been in existence: coverage cannot be retroactively canceled except in the case of fraud; increases in premium rates are reviewed by the Maine Bureau of Insurance and often include public hearings; everyone has the right to appeal decisions made by their health insurance company regarding their insurance claims; and everyone enjoys guaranteed issue of health insurance coverage. These pre-existing protections in Maine have arguably made coverage here at home more expensive relative to other states in the past, but they will also result in little to no appreciable increase over today’s rates while getting a lot more bang for your buck with ACA-managed benefits. While it’s too early to post our proposed rates ahead of the necessary regulatory review and approvals, we are working to bring our products to market with an eye on greater affordability.

The additional benefits and reforms of the ACA that are incorporated within all plans include:


The ACA sets limits on total out of pocket expenditures for all plans in the Marketplace ($6,350 in 2014 for individuals) and provides a sliding scale of financial assistance for individuals based on income to help them afford more comprehensive levels of coverage.

Preventive Care with No Cost-sharing. In addition to mandating plan inclusion of certain essential Health Benefits, preventive care provided by network providers must be provided with no cost-sharing. This means the consumer does not have to pay co-insurance, co-pays, or deductibles to receive important preventive services such as tobacco cessation treatment, breast cancer screenings, and colon cancer screenings.

No Pre-Existing Condition Exclusions. Starting in 2014, there will be no pre-existing condition exclusions al-

Continued on page 5

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By Melissa Waterman

John Olson has been lobstering a long time. When the 91-year-old Cushing man was just a boy his father took him clambering on the mudflats around the family’s property on Hathorn Point. “I just fell for the ocean,” he explained with a broad smile.

Olson grew up as part of the large Olson clan, made famous in dozens of Andrew Wyeth’s paintings. His father, Sam, was a brother of Christina and Alvaro Olson. He himself was named for his grandfather, a Swedish sailor by the same name.

Like most lobstermen in the decades before World War II, Olson made his work in an office but that wasn’t for me. “Boats were my life,” he said. His mother forced him to go through high school, despite Olson’s desire to be on the water. “I was awful bally,” he admits. “She wanted me to work in an office but that wasn’t for me.”

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Olson first started fishing, he rowed to his traps and hauled by hand. Later he purchased a power dory, “a one-lunger,” he said, with a Palmer single cylinder. Then he moved to a clover-leaf-ster boat, with a Roberts engine that had a Model T conversion.

In 1941 Olson saw a chance to buy a 26-foot boat just under construction a house he built himself, overlooking the wharf which he has labored on for sixty years. “I wish I'd taken pictures of this property when I first got it. It was all raw land,” he said.

Olson spent two years on a Navy destroyer, crossing the Atlantic Ocean 18 times. He traveled to Casablanca, Dakar, Gibraltar, Algiers and took part in the invasion of Sicily. After his destroyer was hit by German torpedoes he was sent to England, then Ireland and finally home to Maine for 30 days before shipping out again, this time to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. There he served another two years. “I ended up at the peace signing with Japan,” Olson said quietly, Japan formally surrendered to the United States aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945.

Home from the Navy, Olson worked for a time with his father who cut wood and ran a sawmill on the point. “I didn’t take to it. I wanted to get back to the water,” he said. So he did. Olson married and soon started a family. In 1953 he purchased land on the tip of the point from his uncle and aunt and started to build a house. He fished for lobsters, dragged for shrimp in the winter and even put his hand in seining for herring off Dix Island in the Mussel Ridge Islands. “Jack Dodge, who ran the airfield up in Owls Head, he asked me to help him out. They said they hadn’t caught anything before I came on. We took in 10,000 bushel in two weeks. I tell you I just walked right away from it!” he said with a shake of his head.

Times were very different back in Olson’s youth. Money was definitely not plentiful. Olson recalled one February when he went to tend his traps offshore. There had been a severe storm and his wooden traps had taken a beating. “I went out and hauled seven lobsters that day. Then I went out the next day and caught the same number. I remember thinking ‘what am I going to do?’ I had this family (Olson had five children with his first wife, two with his second) at home,” he explained. “These fellows today don’t know about that stuff!”

Where he once set 125 traps, he now sets 500. “In those days if you had 200 traps, people would say you’re being greedy,” he said. “Plus you would have to re-head them at least once, which took time. The crabs would just eat right through [the mesh].” He shakes his head at the energy of the young lobstermen who operate big fiber-glass boats and spend all winter off shore. “The old fellows and I knew we had to go out in the early morning, come back in and take a nap in the afternoon. There’s nothing like that now,” he said.

Although Olson has never been a member of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, he mentioned with pride the conservation efforts that lobstermen have made over the years. He credits much of those efforts with the current abundance of lobsters. “That double gauge law made a difference. “In those days if you had 200 traps, people would say you were being greedy.”

Plus throwing the breeders back. Us old-timers got this going because we stuck with the gauge. Now it’s like a big hen house, you know. We are feeding them,” he said. Years ago, Olson said, there was little enough bait to go around. “We’d use herring or thole pins, little mackerel. We didn’t use much at all because you just couldn’t.”

Ambling outside Olson’s neat house picking grass from the lawn is a young horse. Around the corner are two cows and another horse. A friendly hound dog lies sleeping in the shade. Olson’s wood shed is well-packed with cut logs for his wood-fired boiler, with which he heats his home. Until last year, Olson cut his own wood. This year he had the eight cords delivered, a slight concession to his age. He stands looking down on the wharf and dock which he has labored on for sixty years. “I wish I’d taken pictures of this property when I first got it, It was all raw land,” he said.

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RESEARCH SHOWS TROUBLING SIGNS IN ENTANGLED WHALES

By Melissa Waterman

In a report released in May, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) scientists provided a new assessment of how fishing lines change a whale’s diving and swimming behavior. They found that an entangled whale suffers from the effects of added buoyancy and drag, expending critical energy as it swims with that gear.

An entangled two-year-old female right whale, called Eg 3911, was first sighted by an aerial survey team on December 25, 2010, near Jacksonville, Florida. Fishing gear was around her mouth, wrapped around both pectoral fins, and trailed about 100 feet behind her tail.

A disentanglement team attempted to cut away the fishing gear on December 29 and 30, but was not successful because the whale was evasive. Another team tried again on January 15, 2011. This team attached a cellphone-size device called a Dtag, developed at WHOI, to the whale. The Dtag recorded the whale’s movements before, during, and after at-sea disentanglement operations.

The disentanglement team also administered a sedative with a dart gun developed for large whale drug delivery by Paxarms NZ in collaboration with Dr. Michael Moore, director of the Marine Mammal Center at WHOI and a marine mammal veterinarian.

The sedated whale allowed the team to approach and remove nearly all the fishing gear. The Dtag then measured 152 dives that Eg 3911 took over six hours. Immediately after Eg 3911 was disentangled, she swam faster, dove twice as deep, and for longer periods. “The whale altered its behavior immediately following disentanglement,” the scientists concluded that disentanglement of Eg 3911 resulted in significant increases in dive duration and depth.

Unfortunately, when the whale was next observed through an aerial survey on February 1, she was dead. After analyzing the data gathered by the monitor, the WHOI scientists concluded that entanglement in buoyant gear may overwhelm a whale’s ability to descend to depths forage on preferred prey. Increased drag can reduce swimming speeds, delaying whales’ timely arrival to feeding or breeding grounds. “Most significant, however, is the energy drain associated with added drag,” said Julie van der Hoop, lead author of the study and a graduate student in the MIT/WHOI Joint Program in Oceanography.

To calculate that drain, the scientists towed three types of fishing gear from a skiff, using tension meters to measure the drag forces that may have affected Eg 3911. They then calculated how much more energy a whale would require to compensate for the drag. Based on that test, van der Hoop and her colleagues estimated that entangled whales have significantly higher energy demands, requiring 70 to 102 percent more power to swim at the same speed as they would unentangled. Many whales spend months and even years entangled in fishing gear, leading to an inexorable drain on their energy stores. The study, by scientists at WHOI, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and NOAA Fisheries, was published online May 21 in the journal Marine Mammal Science.

“Most significant, however, is the energy drain associated with added drag.”

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plante has written about every aspect of New England fisheries during her years as a reporter. "It was a week-to-ten-day trip and I wrote a piece explaining what pair trawling was all about." Eventually the paper opened a satellite office on the Portland Fish Pier in the late 1980s. "I would spend the whole day on the pier. It was a very vibrant place then," Plante recalled. She was able to cover the creation of the Portland Fish Exchange, the first display auction for seafood on the East Coast. Despite being female in a world full of men, Plante found herself brought into the fold, as she put it. "All the long-established people on the waterfront were really very good to me. When I didn’t quite understand something, like how a net worked, no one was condescending. I knew that this was where I wanted to be," she said. But that world was changing. As groundfish stocks tumbled, new federal regulations instituted days-at-sea requirements in the early 1990s. Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act created a stringent ten-year re-building requirement for New England fish stocks. Lobster management moved from the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and Maine instituted its own lobster zone council system. "In the early days the rules were easy," Plante recalled. "There were a few basic rules: minimum mesh size, minimum fish size, a few closed areas. Now things change all the time. I don’t think anyone can completely understand. The industry is so highly regulated and each fishery is so complex." The role of Commercial Fisheries News in such an environment is the same as it has been from its creation, according to Plante: to provide a neutral platform where opinions are shared in a positive way. "A fisherman can see what the scientists, fisheries managers and other fishermen are saying in a way that is digestible," she said. "We work for the whole fishing industry." "The paper was a labor of love for all of us," Alden added. "We were committed to getting the facts right. Janice was a great team player. She maintained her relationships with meticulous care. She doesn’t vixil, she treats her sources with respect. People can speak to her and know she will represent them in a rigorous and fair way." Plante expressed a certain nostalgia for the world she entered back in 1985. "I think everyone had much more fun then. Everything is more difficult now. It’s just so expensive to continue on page 12"
Maine Lobstermen’s Association

Advocating for responsible resource management and prosperity for Maine’s commercial lobstermen since 1954.

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Bass Harbor, 207.288.9846
2nd VP: Kristian Porter
Cutler, 207.259.3306

Sec/Treasurer: Arnold Gamme, Jr.
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS’ MEETING SCHEDULE
All meetings take place at Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast.

July 2, 5 p.m.
No August meeting
Sept. 3, 5 p.m.
Oct. 1, 5 p.m.
Nov. 5, 5 p.m.
Dec. 2, 5 p.m.

STEAMING AHEAD

Obamacare has arrived. Starting in January 2014, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandates that just about everyone must purchase health insurance or pay a fine. Enrollment begins in October!

Health insurance reform will significantly impact Maine’s lobster industry because so many of you are not currently insured. A 2006 survey conducted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) indicates that nearly 40% of Maine lobstermen do not have health insurance and 25% of lobstermen have entire households with no health insurance. Downeast and midcoast lobstermen are less likely to have health insurance than lobstermen in southern Maine.

Nearly one third of lobstermen who have health insurance get it through a spouse’s job, a quarter receive it through government programs and another quarter pay for it out of pocket.

Because so many lobstermen are uninsured, the industry needs to get up to speed quickly on what the Affordable Care Act means for each person. There are a lot of layers to health insurance reform, and many of the regulations are going to affect people differently.

The overwhelming reality is that each of you will need to purchase a qualified health insurance plan by January 2014, or pay a fine. The federal law has set several criteria which have to be met in order for a health insurance plan to be considered ‘qualified.’ The penalty structure for 2014 is either 1% of your income or $95, whichever is greater. That penalty is added to your income tax. This penalty will increase each year until it reaches 2.5% of income or $695 in 2016. Those with uninsured children will pay 50% of the tax for each child under age 19 who is not covered, with a maximum family penalty of three times the individual penalty. I’m sure there will be many who will have to weigh carefully the potential cost of purchasing health insurance against the cost of the penalty.

To help you purchase your health insurance policy, the ACA establishes the health insurance marketplace, formerly referred to as an exchange, as a place to compare and shop for different plans. At least for 2014, Maine’s marketplace will be run by the federal government and only two companies will be offering policies: Anthem and Maine Community Health Options (MCHO). While everyone is familiar with Anthem, MCHO is a new cooperative establishment under the law. MLA recently met with representatives from this co-op, and they are working hard to do business differently.

While the health insurance exchanges have been created to help consumers, you are not required to purchase insurance through an exchange. Maine companies will continue to offer individual policies. And you can continue to get your health insurance through an employer or the government if you qualify. In Maine, many of those who earn less than the federal poverty level are eligible to receive insurance through Medicaid. In 2013, the federal poverty level for a single person is $11,390 and for a family is $23,550.

Health insurance coverage and its mandates for each person. There are a lot of layers to government programs and another quarter will pay for it out of pocket.

Another business 9% 14% 11% 12% 9% 16% 13%
Out of pocket 22% 33% 27% 29% 19% 17% 26%
Government program 48% 25% 22% 26% 25% 21% 13%
Spouse 48% 36% 52% 42% 46% 32% 34%
Whole family 32% 29% 26% 26% 28% 20% 16%
% of those without health insurance:
Lowest income 52% 3% 4% 46% 40% 35% 23%
Health Coverage in Maine Lobster Industry: 2012

2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zones</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lobstermen</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>Spouse</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whole family</td>
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<td>26%</td>
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Source of health insurance for those who have it:

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<th>Level of coverage for those who have it:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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Source: GMRI Socio-economic Survey of Lobster Industry, 2006

65% had health insurance in 2012.
The health reform law can tax credits or subsidies for those purchasing health insurance who earn up to 400% of the federal poverty level, or $94,200 for a family of four. In addition to being available only for coverage purchased through the Marketplace, the subsidy will only pay the cost of the gap between ‘affordable coverage’ and the actual cost of the plan. The law deems affordable coverage as 9.5% of household income, or $8,499 for that family of four earning $94,200.

And, of course there are caveats within this. For instance, if a lobsterman’s spouse has ‘affordable’ health insurance coverage through work, then the lobsterman and the rest of the family would not qualify for a subsidy, even if the cost of that family health insurance policy is more than 9.5% of household income.

There are a host of provisions that affect employers, but they really don’t affect lobstermen. Large employers with 50 or more full-time employees must provide health insurance; if not, the business will pay a tax. This has been dubbed as ‘play or pay.’ Smaller businesses with less than 25 employees can provide health insurance, and the government provides incentives for them to do so through small business tax credits. The new law establishes the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) which is a concept similar to the individual marketplace.

The MLA has long recognized that the cost of health insurance is a huge issue for our members. There have been few, if any, decent options available to lobstermen over the past 15 years. The MLA regularly inquires about establishing a health insurance association group to provide affordable health coverage for our members. Insurance companies are not interested, however, because it would not be profitable for them to undertake this type of plan.

It was our hope that some new options for health insurance would become available through Obama-mcare but, as far as I can tell, this is not the case. In fact, many large national associations will not continue to offer group plans for their members. Those which are large enough are actually considering underwriting their own policies.

The MLA has teamed up with our colleagues at the Massachusetts Fishermen’s Partnership to apply for a grant to hire health insurance “navigators.” If the grant is successful, we will have someone on staff trained to answer questions about the Affordable Care Act and work with lobstermen to navigate through all the red tape. As an industry of independent, self-employed people, we will need guidance to understand the myriad regulations and how the variability of lobstermen’s income could affect eligibility for subsidies. The MLA will continue to learn as much as we can about this and share information with you.

As always, stay safe on the water.

Reminder! TAA Deadlines

July 23 is the deadline for all TAA participants to have completed 12 hours of workshops and their Initial Business Plan. By August 23 participants must have their Long Term Business Plans approved and ready to submit. These are hard deadlines with no exception. The final round of in person trainings has concluded, but courses are available online anytime. Those who still wish to take advantage of the opportunities provided should call the MLA office 967-4555 to make proper arrangements to complete the program.
MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MAŁA DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY

June 4, Belfast – Alexa Dayton from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute updated MLA Directors on the status of the lobster industry profit study. MLA and GMRI partnered on this study to collect detailed data on income and expenses from more than 1,000 lobstermen. These data will be used to better understand how changes in landings, boat price, bait, fuel and other expenses affect the profitability of the industry. GMRI has developed profit simulators which can be used by lobstermen to look at how changes to their business would impact the bottom line. The simulators can be used to test scenarios at the individual, zone or state level. The final report for this project will be available later this summer.

Marianne Lacroix of the Maine Lobster Promotion & Marketing Council discussed the Council’s public relations strategy for the 2013 fishing season. MLPC has retained a PR firm to generate positive media about Maine lobster. Maine lobster was featured on the cover of a recent issue of Outdoors Magazine which includes a taste test highlighting the attributes of soft-shell lobster. The PR firm is working to promote Maine lobster in numerous mainstream print, radio, TV, and social media markets. The message will focus on the sustainability of Maine lobster and the Maine lobster industry’s MSC certification.

MLPC also is conducting a benefit for the victims of Hurricane Sandy through donations of $5,000 worth of lobster from harvesters. The lobster roll sale took place June 27 to 29 in New York City. MLA Directors were in support of the Hurricane Sandy benefit event, but stated that MLA’s outreach to lobstermen and dealers soliciting lobster donations was confusing. MLA is recruiting lobstermen to serve as press contacts and can provide talking points and media training.

The MLA reviewed the list of bills which have been considered by the Legislature. The Board discussed LD 1549, An Act to Provide an Exception for Incidentally Caught Lobster, at length. The MLA did not offer public testimony on this bill. Since then, MLA staff has received a few complaints from members that the association was not out in front opposing this bill. It appears that many did not understand that this was nothing to do with landing dragger caught lobster in Maine. Instead, the bill proposed to allow grounding vessels fishing in offshore Area 3 to land lobster, but did not include such action in areas farther than Maine; and it would prohibit these vessels from dragging for lobster and its strong support for measures which support diverse fish.

communities. LD 349 addresses Area 3, a legal council, if any, Maine lobstermen fish and would keep draggers out of Area 1, which could benefit Maine lobstermen. The Board did not feel it was necessary to take a position on this bill. The Board also stated that implementing the MLAs strong opposition to dragging for lobster. The amended version of LD 486 was passed with a budget of $2.25 million.

MLA will submit comments in favor in DMR’s proposed Lobster and Crab Fishery Management Plan. The comments have been involved with this issue from the start and strongly supports the states effort to minimize possible introductions of diseases or pathogens into the Gulf of Maine from baits used by Maine lobstermen.

NOAA is seeking comments on Amendment 5 to the herring management plan to improve catch monitoring and minimize bycatch of other species. The MLA board is comfortable with comments submitted on this issue while it was under development. Comments were due June 21.

The MLA will examine options to sell or rent its building in Nobleboro, which is not currently occupied. MLA’s legal counsel, Mary Anne Maconis, is now with the firm of Crowell & Moring. She will continue her pro bono representation of MLA through the new firm and continues to work with the Department of Justice on the MLA consent decree.

The MLA membership renewal will be sent out in July; the membership year runs through August 31. MLA Directors did not recommend changes to membership dues or the membership year. The MLA will provide an incentive for harvesters to join or renew join before August 31 by offering a free t-shirt.

The MLAs initiative to work with the lobster industry to maximize the quality of the product will begin this summer. MLA sister organization, the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance, has received a small grant from the RED Board and will conduct trainings and dock visits along the coast to provide training.

The MLA is included in a grant which would provide money to provide guidance to lobstermen on the affordable Care Act which mandates health insurance beginning in 2014. The MLAs next meeting is scheduled for July 2 at Darby’s in Belfast.

ATTENTION FEDERAL LOBSTER PERMIT HOLDERS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has proposed changes to federal American lobster regulations that would implement an individual transferable trap program for the federal waters of Area 2, the Outer Cape Area, and Lobster Conservation Management Area 3. The proposed trap transfer program would allow federal lobster permit holders to buy and sell all or part of a permit’s trap allocation, subject to the restrictions set forth in the proposed rule. Additionally, this action would control lobster trap fishing effort by limiting access in the federal waters of Area 2 and in Outer Cape Cod.

NMFS recently implemented a limited entry program in the federal Area 1 lobster trap fishery. Before this rule was implemented, Area 1 was the only federal lobster area with no limit on trap permits. The Area 1 limited entry rule aimed to keep current trap participants in the fishery while creating a cap on additional permits.

The current proposed rule would allow any of the 3,152 federal lobster permit holders to opt into the proposed Trap Transfer Program and purchase qualified and allocated traps in Area 2-3, or the Outer Cape. The proposed rule, however, restricts trap transfers for individuals who have also qualified into Area 1. Although Area 1 permit holders may opt into the Trap Transfer Program and transfer traps, doing so could result in a forfeit of that permit holder’s ability to fish in Area 1 to the extent that person sells or transfers away part of his or her trap allocation.

While the 800 trap limit applies to all federal permit holders in Area 1, there is no individual permit-based Area 1 trap allocation. As such, there is no Area 1 allocation to debit should a multi-area qualifier (i.e., a person who has qualified into Area 1 as well as another area) sell allocated traps from that other area. Consequently, an Area 1 lobsterman who also qualified into other areas could potentially transfer his Area 2, 3, and/or the Outer Cape Area allocation and still fish with 800 traps in Area 1. This would create an overall increase in lobster trap fishing effort.

A simple regulatory fix—e.g., giving all Area 1 participants an individual 800 trap allocation—could resolve this issue, but has not been recommended by the ASMFC. Therefore, the proposed rule retains the Current person sells or transfers away part of his or her trap allocation, however, they would forfeit eligibility for Area 1 trap fishing because the Area 1 allocation cannot be equally reduced along with the transferred allocation if transferable traps are sold. Comments on this proposed rule must be received by July 29, 2013.

MASS., R.I., CONSIDER AMERICAN LOBSTER DRAFT ADDENDUM XXI

Draft Addendum XXI proposes changes to the transferability program for Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) 3. These changes are designed to allow for flexibility in the movement of traps as the consolidation program for LCMA 2 and 3 is implemented. The proposed measures are intended to address latent effort (unfished allocation) while also providing a mechanism for industry to maintain a profitable fishery as trap reductions occur.

The Draft Addendum is the second in a series of addenda in response to the depleted condition of the Southern New England (SNE) lobster resource the goal of which is to scale the capacity of the SNE fishery to the size of the SNE resource. Since the scope of the SNE resource encompasses all or part of six of the seven LCMA’s established by Amendment 3, additional addenda will be developed to address effort reductions in the remaining LCMA’s 4, 5, and 6. This proposal will be accepted until July 15, 2013.

NOAA PROPOSES TO EXTEND SHIP STRIKE RULE

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service is seeking comments on its proposal to make permanent the rules it implemented five years ago to reduce the number of collisions between ships and North Atlantic right whales. Right whales are among the most endangered species in the world, and are highly vulnerable to ship collisions. The rules are scheduled to expire in December 2013. The existing rules, which reduce an ocean-going vessel’s speed to 10 knots or less during certain times and at locations along the east coast from Maine to Florida, have reduced the number of whales struck by ships since the speed limits began in 2008. No right whale ship strikes have occurred in Seasonal Management Areas since the rule went into place. Modeling studies indicate the measures have reduced the probability of fatal ship strikes of right whales by 80 to 90 percent.

Also, NOAA’s revised estimates indicate that the restrictions cost the shipping industry and other maritime communities about one-third of initial 2008 projections. NOAA states that ship compliance and participation is high, and that in most cases vessels have incorporated speed restrictions into their standard operations and voyage planning.

The rule proposes to continue existing speed restrictions during migration periods along three regions of the U.S. east coast (northeast, mid-Atlantic, and southeast). These measures are in force during the time of year when right whales occur in each area. Speed restrictions apply to vessels that are 65 feet in length or greater. Continued on page 10
er, except federal agency vessels. The proposed rule also seeks public input on ways to measure the effectiveness of the existing speed restrictions and whether they should be phased out in the future.

This proposed rule is part of a more comprehensive approach to conserve right whales from ships. Biologists believe that there are approximately 450 right whales in the northwestern Atlantic population, and that the number is growing steadily.

Written comments on the proposed regulations must be sent to NOAA Fisheries no later than August 6. Public comments may be submitted via regulations.gov or by visiting www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/comment.htm. Written comments should be mailed to: Office of Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries, 1312 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; or faxed to 301-713-4060.

FEDERAL HERRING PLAN AMENDMENT 5

NMFS has proposed regulations to implement measures in Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Management Plan. Amendment 5 was developed by the New England Fishery Management Council to improve the collection of real-time, accurate data. The NMFS has also developed a dynamic management program whereby vessels operators are asked to travel less than 10 knots or avoid areas where whales occur in times and places not covered by seasonal speed restriction zones.

The proposed Amendment 5 management measures include: 1) Revising fishery management program provisions (permitting provisions, dealer and vessel reporting requirements, measures to address bycatch, vessel regulations, regulatory definitions, requirements for vessel monitoring systems, and trip notifications); 2) increasing observer coverage and requiring industry to contribute funds towards the cost of increased observer coverage; 3) expanding vessel requirements to maximize observer’s ability to sample catch-at-sea; 4) minimizing the discarding of unsampled catch; 5) addressing the incidental catch and bycatch of river herring; and 6) revising the criteria for mid-water trawl vessels’ access to ground-fish closed areas. The comment period closed on June 21.

PROPOSED MAINE LOBSTER FISHERY BAIT REGULATIONS

The Maine DMR held two public hearings in June which were lightly attended to discuss proposed bait regulations for the Maine lobster fishery. The proposed rule would enact a mandatory review of all lobster and crab baits to prevent the introduction of contagious pathogens, pests, parasites, or invasive species into Maine waters. This rule has been proposed to implement the requirements of a law passed in 2012. The public comment period closed on June 24.

MENHADEN CATCH LIMITS REDUCED

Effective June 6, the daily catch limit and carrier vessel capacity for menhaden has been reduced from a maximum of 250,000 pounds to 120,000 pounds as approved by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. This reduction is in anticipation of an episodic fishery provision within Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. Maine is mandated to implement and enforce fishery management plans of the Commission under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993 (ACFMA) in order to ensure the responsible and controlled harvest of menhaden in Maine waters.

NEW LAWS AFFECTING THE LOBSTER INDUSTRY

The 126th Legislature has completed another busy session. Several bills passed that are likely to become emergency measures become effective when signed by the Governor; other bills become effective 90 days after the final adjournment of the session, which will be late September. Bills passed this session include:

- LD 486 An Act to Provide for the effective Marketing and Promotion of Maine Lobster. This bill completely restructures the marketing board for the lobster industry by replacing the Maine Lobster Promotion Council with a new organization, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative. The new law includes a revised fee structure for lobstermen, dealers and processors to fund the Collaborative. The Collaborative will include at least five members, a representative of the lobstermen’s advisory council for the species for which the plan is developed, if such an advisory council exists.
- LD 1448 An Act to Preserve Marine Resources Licenses for Active Duty Service Members. This act amends the state law by extending the military exemption from 6 to 10 years; extending the amount of time a student is eligible for a student license by the length of service of up to 10 years; and applies this military exemption to all limited entry fisheries.
- LD 72 An Act to Open the St. Croix to River Herring became law in April resulting in the unconstrained passage of river herring with the opening of the St. Croix River on May 1.

LOBSTER TRAP TAGS

There were reports of trap tags failing early this season. The DMR said that the manufacturer has not tested and sent out tags that failed. The company has made an adjustment to the manufacturing process that should resolve the issue. The DMR has been assured by the manufacturer that it will stand behind their product. The DMR will monitor the issue.

MLA MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

MLA gives out a big shout out to MLA member, the Clam Shack of Kennebunkport, which won the prestigious title of “America’s Best Lobster Roll” at the Tasteable Table’s Lobster Roll Rumble New York City in June. MLA member Red Hook Lobster Pound and MLA/Alliance supporter Luke’s Lobster were also strong contenders in the event. MLA member, Phillip Tuttle of Harpswell, made headlines in June when his boat took on water and sunk. The 90-year-old lobsterman was able to hang onto the safety of a nearby island, and was rescued by family members. “I’m still here. It wasn’t my time to go,” Tuttle said.
Glens Lobster Co Coop
F W Thurston Co Inc
Cruises
Finest Kind Scenic
ACA
Farm Credit of Maine
Eaton Trap Co. Inc.
Service
Trust Co
Damariscotta Bank &
Cushing Diesel, LLC
Inc
Coastal Documentation
Canovy Cove Lobster Co Inc
Cooks Lobster House
Cashing Diesel, LLC
Damariscotta Bank & Trust Co
DB Rice Fisheries
Eastern Tire & Auto Service
Eaton Trap Co. Inc.
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F W Thurston Co Inc
Georgetown Fishermen’s Coop
Glen Lobster Co
Grundens USA Ltd
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Guy Cotten, Inc
Hamilton Marine
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Interstate Lobster Inc
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Island Fisherman’s Wharf
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Jeff’s Marine, Inc
John Bay Boat Company
‘Keg Store
Kent’s Wharf
Kips Seafood Co
Lake Pemaquid Inc
Linda Bean’s Maine Lobster
Little Bay Lobster Inc
Lobster ME
Lobster Products Inc
Lonia’s Hydraulic Inc
Maine Coast Petroleum, Inc
Maine Financial Group
Maine Lobster Promotion Council
Maine Port Authority
Maine Salt Company
Maine Sea Grant
Marine Hydraulic Engineering Co Inc
Midcoast Marine Supply
Nautilus Marine Fabrication Inc.
Neptune Inc
New England Marine & Industrial Inc
Nova Tec Braids LTD
Pensacola Bay & River Pilot Association
Pensacola East Resource Center
PJ Lobster Company
Plante’s Buoy Sticks
Polyform US
Promens Saint John
Quahog Lobster Inc
Ready Seafood
Red Hook Lobster Pound
Rockland Savings Bank
Sawyer & Whitman Marine
Shucks Maine Lobster
South Bristol Fisherman’s Co-op
Stonington Lobster Coop
Superior Bait and Salt
Superior Marine Products Inc
The Compass Insurance Group
The First NA
Vinalhaven Fisherman’s Coop
Weirs Motor Sales Inc
Worcesters Lobster Bait

Many thanks to these fine businesses, the MLAs’ Keeper members!

Atlantic Edge Lobster
BBB Lobster Trap
Beals J脖子port Coop Inc.
Bell Power Systems Inc.
Bowdoin College Dining Services
Branch Brook Farm
Calendar Islands Maine Lobster LLC
Cape Porpoise Lobster Co Inc
Channel Fish Co
Chapman & Chapman
Chase Leavitt & Co.
Chesapeake Corp
Coastal Documentation
Conovy Cove Lobster Co Inc
Cooks Lobster House
Cashing Diesel, LLC
Damariscotta Bank & Trust Co
DB Rice Fisheries
Eastern Tire & Auto Service
Eaton Trap Co. Inc.
Farm Credit of Maine
ACA
Finest Kind Scenic
Cruises
F W Thurston Co Inc
Georgetown Fishermen’s Coop
Glen Lobster Co
Grundens USA Ltd

Rumble continued from page 3

be a fisherman these days, and every- one is under extraordinary pressure.”

Plante moved to Ithaca, New York, in 1990, where her husband took a position at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. They have since become involved in train- ing puppies for Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a nonprofit guide dog organi- zation based in Yorktown Heights. “We’ve raised six puppies thus far. In fact I took one to the Fishermen’s Fo- rum one year. She went to the semi- nars with me and the opening recep- tion,” Plante said. “She was great.”

Plante primarily covers the actions of the NEMFC and ASMFC for the paper. “It’s hard for fishermen to go to all of those meetings. It’s very time consum ing and some require a lot of travel. So I go, and then I can tell them what ASMFC did on herring, eels, lobsters, northern shrimp.” “The meetings, which last for days and of- ten feature convoluted discussions and arcane processes, call for a high degree of concentration and under- standing. Add to that the pressure of constant deadlines for a monthly paper and, Plante said, it can get ex- hausting. “The thing that keeps me at it is that I like being part of the indus- try and everyone has made me feel I can contribute in a helpful way,” she said. “People come up to me and say I’m glad you came to the meeting. I’m glad that you wrote about this, now I understand it.”
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CANADA-EU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT STILL UNDER NEGOTIATION

By Nancy Griffin

Canada first began talks about a trade agreement with the European Union back in 2007. Preliminary joint studies and nine negotiating sessions later, some in Canada were hopeful the agreement, called the Canada-European Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), would have been reached in June.

Despite misgivings by some sectors, there were predictions that CETA would be finalized by the time of the G8 Summit in Northern Ireland in mid-June. But instead of an agreement, an EU spokesman at the G8 called Canada out for delaying the pact.

Fearing they might lose protections were never enthusiastic about CETA, some Canadian fisheries were bedeviled by other issues, such as limits on exports of Canadian meat products to European markets. Harper left the G8 on June 18 after failing to win some final concessions, particularly from France and Ireland for duty-free access to European markets for Canadian beef and pork.

Fisheries workers in the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) have expressed concerns since 2009 that the federal government was running processing requirements, only saying that the federal negotiator for CETA would present the provincial position at the talks.

In early June, Kathy Dunderdale, Newfoundland premier, said discussions between the province and the federal government were running more smoothly. “We seem to be back on track,” Dunderdale told reporters following a speech in St. John’s. “We have alignment. This is a very big deal for Canada.” However, Dunderdale did not reveal if Ottawa had negated.

“We have alignment. This is a very big deal for Canada.” However, Dunderdale did not reveal if Ottawa had negated.

By Nancy Griffin

Continued on page 18

of Maine lobster to Korea increased 200% in 2012 and continue to be a growth area. Lobster from Maine currently accounts for only about 10% of the lobster consumed in South Korea. The goal of this educational program is to increase consumption of Maine lobster by the South Koreans to 30-40% of the total within the next one to two years.

The program could not have taken place without the generous sponsorship of many organizations including Calendar Islands Maine Lobster, Maine Lobster Promotion Council, Lobster Research Education Development board, Food Export North-east, Maine Tourism Association/Maine Restaurant Association, Maine Office of Tourism, East Coast Seafood and Greenhead Lobster.

In other news, the Maine Lobster Promotion Council is running a public relations campaign designed to create positive media coverage for Maine lobster. Most of the effort is targeted to media operating outside of the state. One recent success story involves a web site called Serious Eats.

Serious Eats is a web site with 1.9 million unique monthly visitors and a reputation as a reliable source about the food we eat. As a result of the MLPC’s public relations effort, the site ran a four-part series on Maine lobster. The highlight of the series was a hard-shell lobster versus soft-shell taste test. As suspected, soft-shell was the favorite with a special recognition of its superior flavor, texture and ease of use. We knew that the taste test had made an impact when people were heard discussing the merits of hard-shell versus soft-shell lobster at a James Beard Foundation event in New York City just after the taste test was published.

Finding and shipping soft-shell lobsters from Maine to New York City at the end of May proved a challenge. Jess’ Market in Rockland came through with impressive handling and packing, so that their soft-shell lobsters arrived in New York City alive and in great condition. The big box of beautiful soft as well as hard-shell Maine lobsters created excitement even among the seasoned food professionals at Serious Eats.

Thank you to Jess’ Market for its role in presenting the best Maine lobster possible.

New fans of Maine’s famous crustacean.
MLPC photo.
decided to start his own anyway. "I grew up on the water and when my relatives came from away they were always fascinated with the lobster industry, the islands, the coastline, and the whole nine yards," said Robertson. "So I got my captain's license and certification between 1991 and 1992." Robertson's business has grown during recent years. "We've had people come from all over the U.S. We've even had people from Japan and Germany." He runs three to four tours each day and also employs another captain who runs at least three tours each day. "That's 30+ people here in town that visit the grocery stores and restaurants and buy gasoline," said Robertson. "I think that's been very positive for the town of Milbridge over the years." Robertson said that having well-known businesses in small communities like Milbridge makes those places more of a destination point for people traveling to Maine. One of Robertson's most popular tours is the Puffins and Seabirds Cruise, which lasts approximately three hours. "We travel out to Petit Manan Island which is a National Wildlife Refuge," said Robertson. "Here to see whales, puffins, wildlife and scenery is among the top ten. People who come from fishing backgrounds. "I feel that I have a chance to influence people to care about the things that I do and understand how important conservation is to our long-term health on the planet." The BHWWC also offers puffin and seabird tours. "We see puffins at Petit Manan Island every morning between May 25 and August 20," said Klyver. "We have a great partnership with the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge who steward the island. We have a hand-held radio we use to talk directly with the researchers on shore and they can answer guests' questions. Also, we have a live puffin cam on the island and large plasma TV screen on the boat so people can see and hear the birds as we approach." Like Robertson Sea Tours, BHWWC conducts whale watching, seal watching, and lobster fishing tours. They also offer a lighthouse and national park tour, a tour to Baker Island with Acadia National Park, and other special cruises. Customers come from all over the U.S. as well as Europe, India, Asia, and Canada. "Tourism is Maine's most important economy," said Klyver. "It is annually worth more than all fisheries, forestry and agriculture put together. The Maine Office of Tourism keeps track of what people search for on their web site. Lighthouses are often number one and lobsters number two and whales are in the top ten. People who come here to see whales, puffins, wildlife and scenery buy lobster dinners and seafood, gas and stay at hotels. Another Maine-based tour business is Belfast-based Wanderbird Expedition Cruises, run by Captains Rick and Karen Miles, both of whom come from fishing backgrounds. "Icky was an offshore fisherman for the first twelve years of his career as a mariner, and then owned and operated a schooner here in Maine for the next fifteen years," said Karen. "I am an artist and furniture maker from a fishing family in Rockland. My dad was a lobsterman." Karen and her husband wanted to have a life-style that would allow them to work on the water together as a couple along with their two dogs. That's what led to the idea of running a tour boat with cruises not only in Maine but also to other areas. Robertson runs Robertson's Sea Tours out of Milbridge. Prior to starting the business, he operated a fishing boat for many years. Robertson was always interested in running a tour business and believed that one could flourish in his area. Although he saw several tour businesses go under during the 1990's he
By Melissa Waterman

Even in the highly traditional world of lobster fishing, things are changing rapidly. Not only is the ocean altering, becoming more acidic and warmer decade by decade, but ways of selling lobsters are changing as well. To help lobstermen better understand the market mechanisms that affect the price paid for their catch, we begin a new series focusing on the movement of lobster from the dock to the plate.

Fishermen and the buyers of fish have long had an antagonistic relationship. A fisherman has a fragile product, one whose quality diminishes the moment it lands on the deck. He wants to move it fast, and at the highest price possible. A buyer wants to pay the lowest price possible for that catch and get it at the exact moment he needs it. These two motivations often conflict.

For years many seafood transactions in Maine took place quietly behind closed doors. A broker shook hands with a fishing vessel owner and the deal was done. That fisherman might not know what another buyer would offer for his catch. The broker might not know that another boat was about to offload a higher-quality catch. Prices fluctuated by the hour and by the day and no one revealed much about anything.

Then came the Portland Fish Exchange.

The Portland Fish Exchange opened its doors with great fanfare back in 1985. At that time groundfishermen in Maine trucched their catches to Boston or landed their fish in New Bedford or Gloucester to be sold at seafood auction houses. Fishermen sold their catch unseen, by the boat load, to a medley of buyers. The Portland Exchange, by contrast, was a display auction, the first on the East Coast.

"One of the principal ideas behind the display auction was to find a way to reward well-cared-for fish with higher prices. But fish quality is very subjective and best left up to the buyer," explained University of Maine resource economist Jim Wilson, who was involved in the creation of the Exchange. The auction would display the catch from all of the boats which landed that day for buyers to look at and bid on. "So in a display auction it's 'what you see is what you get.' In a competitive market, if buyers are good judges of quality and want quality, they tend to reward quality with higher prices and fishermen tend to respond with better handling, because it pays." The Portland Fish Exchange was heralded as the start of a new era in seafood sales. But it did not include lobster.

"The Exchange was about fish," explained Robin Alden, who at the time was publisher of Commercial Fisherman News. "Lobster was not the issue we were trying to solve. There were plenty of wharves and dealers working with lobster." In addition, Wilson added, lobster would not have benefited from inclusion in a display auction because lobster landings were moderate in the mid-1980s, compared to today, and competition among buyers was robust. Quality was not an issue. "The market [for lobsters] was fairly competitive then compared with fish. Lobsters were soft or hard and there were two distinct prices. But that was when lobsters were relatively scarce," he said.

Today, however, the element of quality has become more important in lobster sales. As the catch has grown enormously in the last decade both here and in Canada, the price for lobster has dropped. Distinguishing Maine lobster in the marketplace as a high-quality item is one way for lobstermen to command a higher boat price.

John Sackton, publisher of Seafood.com News, an online clearinghouse of national and international fishermen think that including lobster in lobster sales will improve the price to lobstermen over time. "The reason that lobster prices are all over the map is because what is delivered [to buyers] is all over the map," he said. If lobstermen or those they sell to would grade the lobsters, they could set clear prices for different types of lobsters. Instead, he said, they continue to sell a mixed boat load in order get paid quickly and go out to harvest more lobsters. Quality does not enter into that equation.

Keith Flett thinks his on-line trading platform might be one way to motivate higher prices. Open Ocean Trading began operating in 2010, offering fishermen and buyers the means to contract in advance to lock in a price for all or just a portion of a fisherman’s catch, before the trip happens. Just this year he has expanded the on-line company to include lobster. The company announced that they will be contracting for lobster landed in the ports of Plymouth, MA; Portland, Harpswell, Boothbay, and Cutler, Maine; and Beach Point, Prince Edward Island.

"The major problem with the price for lobster is that it doesn't allow for the best price discovery," Flett said. "You can't find out what the price for lobster is, as you can with say, pollock." In addition, there is no mechanism in place to reward landing a quality lobster, one that ships well. Open Ocean Trading allows buyers to set up what Flett calls a "forward contract" with a particular boat or wharf for a certain amount of lobsters to be delivered at a certain time. The company acts as the intermediary between the two, vetting the financial and institutional strength of both. This allows the boat to know what it will be paid for its catch before the trip happens, and for the buyer to make certain of the price. Similar systems are in place for aquaculture-raised salmon in Chile and Norway.

Flett believes that this system gives fishermen more control over their resource, in this case lobster. "The whole thing started with egg farmer, New York State, " he said. "The day he decided to start breeding lobsters he started establishing prices forward, telling the buyers what the price is going to be." Part of Open Ocean Trading's on-line platform includes information about the lobstermen who land the lobsters. "We incorporate handling practices on the boat, post pictures of the wharf and boat, give information about the captain and crew, to show they take pride in the catch. The story is worth money," he said. He and a technician from Aquatic Science and Health Services in Canada will work with lobstermen at the docks this summer to show how to handle and properly pack the lobsters to ship to a buyer. They will test the protein levels of lobster and take other steps to ensure that the lobster shipped remains as healthy as possible. "The aim is to build a relationship," Flett said. "So that the buyer will say 'I know that so-and-so takes good care of his lobster on a daily basis and so I will pay a little more.'"

Sackton has some reservations about this new approach to lobster sales. "What is a forward contract for, exactly?" he questioned. "They must specify a grade, percent of shedders, size for it to work. Then [the contract] could establish a good knowledge and transparency about the price for soft shell lobsters."

"To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often," said English Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Selling lobster has long been a quiet art, practiced by lobstermen, wharf owners and buyers in private transactions. But lobstermen are frustrated with the current system of selling lobster which leaves them at a disadvantage. What other change does the future offer?"

Next month: lobster cooperatives.
Michel offered to take me around to some of the local wharves so we hit the road. Our first stop was just outside of Shediac at Pointe-du-Chêne. There I met a fisherman named Norbert who was working on his wooden traps in preparation of the LFA 25 season (which starts August 10 and closes October 10).

We traveled on to Cap-Pélot and turned down Chemin du Quai – Wharf Road – passing a large seafood restaurant and a herring smokehouse before encountering Michel’s predecessor with the MFU, a fisherman named Mario. He was just wrapping up his snow crab season and hauling his boat out of the water. The coastline in this area is flat and sandy and this particular wharf makes use of a natural sand dune as a sort of breakwater. As we left the wharf and continued along the road to Petit Cap, we passed numerous smoke houses and notable processing operations like Westmorland Fisheries and Cape Bald Packers.

Suddenly it hit me: every wharf that we visited was a wharf of independents. Each wharf in every harbor is built and maintained by the federal government and managed by local volunteer not-for-profit Harbour Authorities. Each wharf has an ice house (which may or may not be maintained depending on local needs), a boat launch, excellent breakwater systems, concrete decking. They all seemed to be in incredible condition. Bait is supplied by the buyer to whom a fisherman sells his catch. Groups of fishermen might pool together to buy an Irving or an Esso fuel truck meet them at the dock to refuel their vessels. The tides in the region are small – only about two feet on average – so hoists are not a prominent feature on the wharves.

From Petit Cap we drove to our final stop overlooking the six-mile water. As we left the wharf and continued along the road, we hit some of the local wharves so we hit the road. Our first stop was just outside of Shediac where I met him for a meeting with his neighbors. From there we drove north to Richibucto where I was staying in a little mom and pop cottage. I walked over to the wharf and tried my rusty high school French on a group of fishermen who had just returned with similar net reels, only these were for the gazpereau – alewife – fishery. I learned that the fish were being smoked and shipped to Haiti. One fisherman told me that since the earthquake in Haiti resulted in less electricity and more difficulty in storing food, demand for smoked gazpereau has gone up because they keep better than herring.

The next morning I drove north on Route 134, veering off in Saint-Louis de Kent via Kouchibouguac National Park’s tree-lined road. Abruptly the trees stopped just as soon as I exited the eastern part of the park and I saw a large coastline of modest homes, a small diner and a large Catholic church. I had made it to Pointe-Sapin for my appointment to meet Fernand Gaudet and Méguelle Goguen at Crown Seafood, but I was early so I went to find the wharf.

Storage lockers, a boat launch, two concentric L-shaped piers, and another pier with the fish co-op were protected by a series of granite breakwaters. I walked around and looked at the boats, noticing again these stacked decks and net reels. I came across a group of fishermen – two on a boat removing nets, two standing at the wharf and another carrying nets to a pile ready to load on the truck. We chatted for a while in French until I told them I worked for l’association des pêcheurs du homard de Maine. They laughed and told me my French was good, but we switched to English. Their questions were similar to those I had heard from many of those fishermen I spoke with along the Northumberland Strait.

I left the wharf and headed over to Crown Seafood. A simple sign on the main road welcomed me down the driveway past a parking lot full of cars, to a white, non-descript building. Last summer I had the opportunity to tour Paturel International, a massive processing facility operated by East Coast Seafood on Deer Island, New Brunswick. Where Paturel has incredible machinery and computer-operated systems, Crown is a small handpick facility made up of a couple of trailer tents for preparing cooking, packaging and freezing with only 175 employees at the peak of their May to January processing season.

Just inside, I met Fernand Gaudet and Méguelle Goguen. Fernand explained that his family owned Westmorland Fisheries – a fishery. I learned that the fish were being smoked and shipped to Haiti. One fisherman told me that since the earthquake in Haiti resulted in less electricity and more difficulty in storing food, demand for smoked gazpereau has gone up because they keep better than herring.

The next morning I drove north on

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**Canadian Employment Insurance for the lobster industry**

In Canada, fishermen and those who work in seafood processing plants, which are typically open seasonally, can receive federal benefits when they are not employed. The Employment Insurance (EI) program provides temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians who have lost their job through no fault of their own, while they look for work or upgrade their skills. Employment Insurance Fishing Benefits provide financial support to self-employed fishermen. These benefits are based on the fisherman’s earnings during the previous 52-week period during which the individual earned at least $3,000 from fishing or worked at least 490 hours in something related to fishing. The amount a fisherman can receive is determined based on contributions made in to the Employment Insurance program during the time he is working. The maximum insurable earnings amount for 2012 is $45,900, thus the maximum weekly amount a fisherman could receive would be $882.69.

Employment Insurance Regular Benefits are available to any individual who loses his or her job (for example, due to a seasonal layoff) and who is available for work but cannot find a job. A person is eligible for Employment Insurance benefits if they have been without work for at least 7 days and have worked for at least 40 hours in the last 52 weeks and worked a set number of hours within that time frame. Individuals can receive 55% of their weekly earnings during the last 12 months, or $485 per week.
CETA is not likely to be of any concern to Maine or to the United States," said economist Charles Colgan, professor and chair of the Community Planning and Development Program at the University of Southern Maine, Muskie Institute.

"Most of Maine's lobster processing is done in Canada. We have no similar laws to those in Newfoundland and Labrador, so there are no statutes their agreement will have any impact on," he added. Some of the Newfoundland laws have no effect on the U.S., the issue was also not addressed in the 19-year-old North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

"There was a dispute about minimum lobster sizes between the U.S. and Canada under NAFTA," said Colgan. "U.S. law prohibits undersized lobster and those caught in the Northumberland Strait were smaller than the U.S. minimum. The Canadians said, under NAFTA, they had a perfect right to bring their small lobsters in, but the arbitrator said the U.S. had a right to make and enforce laws to conserve our lobster." Current trade talks have been too secretive for some in the Liberal party of Canada. Liberal spokesman Lawrence McCaulay said, "While the government has stated that it will keep policies such as fleet separation and operator-operator in place for now, there is no doubt that their previous disastrous communications and consultation approach with regard to the modernization of our inshore fishery created fear and uncertainty throughout eastern Canada."

But Colgan thinks the arbitrator's decision regarding undersized lobster under NAFTA, that concerns about Newfoundland's processing and other Atlantic fisheries issues could be "a tempest in a political teapot."

Canada's government Web site said the Canada-EU joint study that preceded CETA negotiations indicates liberalizing trade in goods and services could bring a potential 20 percent boost to bilateral trade and GDP gains of up to $12 billion (Canadian) in the medium-size companies that characterize the northeastern U.S. seafood industry. "The issue is, if the Canadians are successful in eliminating tariffs or duty on lobster products, that could be a huge trade advantage for them. How would that impact U.S. competitors on similar lobster products?" she said.

Colleen Coyle, seafood program coordinator at Food Export Northeast, a public agency dedicated to improving U.S. food exports, said that the U.S. plans to begin talks with the EU.

"The U.S. is also beginning trade liberalization negotiations with the EU. Food Export-Northeast last month formally requested the U.S. trade representative to negotiate the elimination of duties for seafood products," she said in an email. "The formal request stated that "EU markets are vital to distribute the vast production of lobster and scallops harvested from the northeastern U.S. Eliminating EU tariffs for our region's fishery products will vastly improve the competitiveness of the small to medium-size companies that characterize the northeastern U.S. seafood industry."
LOBSTERS AND CHEMICALS
A BAD MIX

By Melissa Waterman

It's the height of summertime. Everything around us is green, including those lovely lawns that are so coveted by American homeowners. We all enjoy a nice expanse of green on which to hold the kids' birthday parties or a family barbecue. But do we understand exactly what we are putting on the lawns and how those chemicals might affect Maine's most important marine species, lobster?

The amount of herbicides and pesticides Maine homeowners spread on their lawns each year has grown steadily over the past several decades. Maine's Board of Pesticides Control records an increase from 800,000 pounds of pesticides applied in the state in 1995 to 6.2 million in 2007. Herbicide use also has become widespread, particularly in the form of the popular "weed-n-feed" formulations, designed to fertilize lawns while killing incipient weeds at the same time. Applied at the wrong time of year, in the wrong weather or in excessive amounts, these herbicides and pesticides are not taken up by plants or the targeted pests, but instead simply run off the land into nearby rivers or streams. Those rivers and streams, in turn, carry the chemicals to the sea. Surface water sampling done by Friends of Casco Bay detected multiple herbicides and at least one insecticide and fungicide in water leaving specific residential areas within the bay's watershed. Some of the concentrations were high enough to harm aquatic species in the bay.

The Board of Pesticides Control recommends specific Best Management Practices to ensure that what's spread on the lawn does not go into groundwater or surface water. These include such common sense practices as raising your lawn mower's blade to allow for longer grass, not fertilizing in the spring but rather in the fall when roots require more nourishment, and refraining from applying anything when the ground is saturated.

The towns of York and Kennebunk have taken steps on their own to educate residents about the effect of lawn-care chemicals on marine species. The popular Lawns for Lobsters program in Kennebunk and Lawns2Lobsters program in York urge residents to take the pledge to wean themselves from chemicals. Each town has a brochure that offers tips on soil testing, grass height, clover as a form of weed control and nitrogen fixer, and rain gardens, barriers and vegetative buffers as ways to keep water on lawns, instead of allowing it to flow down storm drains and eventually to the ocean.

Another part of a Maine summer is the appearance of that noxious pest, the mosquito. Decades ago DDT was used to keep mosquitoes in check, with devastating, unintended consequences for birds such as the osprey. Today’s efforts may have long-term consequences for marine species, particularly lobsters. Lobsters, like mosquitoes, are arthropods; there are 1 billion phyla of arthropods: Chelicera (spiders), Myriapoda (centipedes), Crustacea (crabs and lobsters), and Hexapoda (insects such as mosquitoes).

With the advent of West Nile virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis, municipalities and homeowners once again are taking a keen interest in getting rid of summertime mosquito populations. Municipalities must get a permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) if their mosquito-control plan involves chemicals applied to water. Those chemicals must come from a list of aquatic chemicals authorized by the DEP for use. Your neighbor, on the other hand, is likely to use whatever is on sale at the local Home Depot.

Still, as the Maine Department of Agriculture states on its Web site, "Chemical control is only a temporary solution to mosquito problems. Overuse of chemical pesticides can adversely affect non-target organisms and can lead to pesticide-resistant mosquito populations that are more difficult to control."

The Atlantic Lobster Sustainability Foundation in Canada is undertaking a study to determine the effect of pyrethroids (deltamethrin, permethrin and cypermethrin) on young lobster (larvae and juveniles), according to the Cornell University Cooperative Extension Toxicology Network. Deltamethrin is a pyrethroid insecticide that kills insects on contact and through digestion. It is used commonly to control caterpillars on apples, pears and hops, and for the control of aphids, mealy bugs, scale insects, and whiteflies. Permethrin is used on cotton crops and also eggs, vegetables and fruit as well as lice treatments and pest control. Cypermethrin is extremely toxic to fish and aquatic invertebrates and is used to control sea lice in salmon aquaculture.

This spring the Board of Pesticides Control proposed amendments to its mosquito-control regulations, one of which exempted government-sponsored, wide-area mosquito control activities from existing regulations, such as informing landowners within 500 feet of the target area of the spraying or authorization from individual landowners. Organizations as varied as the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association and the MLA spoke out against any easing of mosquito-control rules. Board staff member Ann Bills said that the Board adopted the amendments to the spraying rules as an emergency measure; they will be in force this summer. Those amendments now go to the Legislature to review and adopt as permanent rules.

Garbo depends on the hard work and stewardship of Maine lobstermen.

Thank you!

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SO YOU WANT TO KNOW: What happens when lobsters get crowded?

By Sarah Paquette

Each season Maine lobstermen are setting new records for the number of pounds of lobster landed in the state. Last year a total of 126 million pounds were landed, an all-time record. These large volumes have caused people to think about new ways to deal with the abundant supply and limited demand through better marketing. But what effects does a population increase have on the lobsters themselves?

That question led Noah Oppenheim and Rick Wahle to their 2009 study of lobster predation. “Rick had hours and hours of footage of tethered lobsters in the ocean during the day from his study of footage of tethered lobsters in the ocean during the day from his study of lobster predation. Rick Wahle to their 2009 study of lobster predation. That question led Noah Oppenheim and Rick Wahle to their 2009 study of lobster predation.

The most common predators [fish] hasn’t changed as much as people think. The small and juvenile fish are still there, it’s the large fish that have declined.”

With less pressure from predators, juvenile lobsters have a better chance of surviving. Unless they run into a bigger, hungry lobster, that is. “Lobsters have to compete with each other for resources like food and shelter,” Wahle said. Because there are so many lobsters competing for food, when lobsters come across something that is edible, they eat it. “Cannibalism is common typically when populations are booming and there is over-crowding,” as seen in other animal populations, Wahle explained.

“With higher populations, lobsters have a higher encounter rate,” Oppenheim said. “Predation is higher now than it was 20 years ago.” His working hypothesis is that the increase in cannibalism is a direct result of the explosion of the lobster population. “The major question now is, is this strong enough to decrease lobster populations long-term? That is still a complete unknown.”

Oppenheim and Wahle plan to take the next step this summer to test if cannibalism is a direct result of population density. “We want to see if anything changes when we tether small lobsters in different depths and different areas of the coast,” said Oppenheim. The 2009 study took place in mid-coast Maine in less than 20 feet of water. Both Wahle and Oppenheim expect that at greater depths they will see different predators on film. “Green crabs were the main predator during the day,” Oppenheim said.

Continued on page 22
CHANGE IS UP TO YOU

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NEW MARINE PATROL OFFICERS START WORK

Two new officers have joined the ranks of the Maine Marine Patrol. Deanna Dow of Potsdam, New York and Brandon Bezo of Ticonderoga, New York were sworn in Friday, May 27.

The Maine Marine Patrol's three-week training program covers a range of issues from law to navigation before starting patrol duty. After completing the training program Bezo will patrol out of Port Clyde and Dow will patrol out of Boothbay.

VOLTURNUS REVS UP

The VolturNUS 1.8, a 65-foot-tall floating turbine prototype created by the University of Maine through the DeepCwind consortium, started producing electricity in June. The VolturNUS, which is anchored off Castine, is a 1.8 scale model of a proposed 6-megawatt (MW) turbine.

The turbine, which was assembled at Cianbro’s facility in Brewer and towed nearly 30 miles from Brewer to Castine by vessels from the Maine Maritime Academy, is now anchored in 80 feet of water. It is the first offshore wind turbine in North America connected by undersea cable directly to the electricity grid. Following the test run in June, the DeepCwind Consortium plans to build two 6 MW VolturNUS floating turbines to be moored off Monhegan Island in 2016. Design for these giant turbines is currently underway, funded in part through a federal Department of Energy competition called the Advanced Technology Demonstration Program for Offshore Wind.

LOBSTER INDUSTRY INVESTS IN ITS FUTURE

The Legislature approved a major expansion of industry funding for marketing of Maine lobster. The Maine Lobster Promotion Council will be replaced by the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative which will be funded by Maine’s lobstermen, dealers and processors at $750,000 in year 2014, $1.5 million in 2015, and $2.25 million in 2016 through 2018. The law establishes an 11 member board comprised of 4 harvesters, 3 dealers/processors, 2 public and 2 ex-officio members (Commissioner of DMR and Department of Economic and Community Development). The DMR Commissioner will appoint the board to serve during the transition period from 2013 through 2018. A third party audit to assess the effectiveness of the Collaborative’s work will be presented to the Marine Resources Committee by January 2018. The law will sunset in October 2018 unless it is reauthorized by the Legislature. A bill to appropriate $1 million from the General Fund to support marketing of Maine lobster was not included in the Legislature’s budget.

PORTLAND LOBSTERS ON THE MOVE

Portland Harbor will undergo dredging this winter, according to Tom Robbins, chair of the Portland Harbor Commission. The dredging is due to begin sometime after November 1 and continue to April 1, 2014. The area to be dredged runs from the inner harbor Veterans’ Bridge area to Bug Light at the tip of South Portland. “We haven’t picked a contractor yet,” Robbins said in early June. The harbor commission will oversee the relocation of lobsters found within the planned dredge area. “We will use 300 specially-designed traps that have no escape vent and a little smaller mesh. Two weeks ahead of the time scheduled to dredge a particular spot, we will set the traps,” Robbins explained. After a two-day set, the traps will be hauled. The captured lobsters will be counted and their sex and size noted. Then they will be moved to a site somewhere nearby as designated by the Department of Marine Resources. “We will be out there every day for the two weeks, then jump to the next spot,” Robbins said.

The commission is looking for lobstermen to take part in the relocation project. It will pay lobstermen an hourly wage and cover the cost of bait and fuel. When dredging took place in 1998, the Casco Bay Estuary Project supervised lobster relocation, moving approximately 30,000 lobsters from the inner harbor to another site. “We’ve heard that the inner harbor population is down a bit compared to the last time,” Robbins said. He could not estimate how long the dredging would take to be completed. “We will know when the bids [for the contract] are opened. Last time the dredge scoop was the size of a trailer truck. It moved pretty fast,” Robbins said.

So You Want To Know continued from page 20

“But they are restricted to the upper tidal zone, so we don’t expect to see them preying on a tethered lobster in deeper waters.” The specific locations along the coast at which the small lobsters are tethered may also make a difference in the type of predators seen, according to Walhe. Daytime video footage from southern New England, for example, shows no indication of cannibalism in lobsters. “It may be because there is a greater diversity of fish in that area,” he said. “Also shell disease is more common in southern New England so they haven’t seen the problem in lobsters there.” Like mid-coast and Downeast Maine has.

If this summer’s video footage shows lobsters preying on each other, that would be a strong indication that cannibalism is in lobsters due to population density.
moreland Fisheries in Cap-Pelé up until three years ago when they sold those operations and maintained the smallest plant, Crown Seafoods in Pointe-Sapin. Miguelle has been with the business for about seven years and came to it circuitously as a business student. She has found her passion in seafood and management. Known for their consistent level of high quality, Crown’s products are in high demand in overseas markets. Known for their passionate in seafood and management. Every person I met and the communities that depend on our ways of life are critically important to the success and long term sustainability of the lobster industry and the communities that depend on it.

and the same curiosity and anxiety that I met had the same concerns with each other, both with our fellow fishermen and lobster businesses in the Maritimes. Having these important conversations to improve the understanding of our respective fisheries and our ways of life are critically important to the success and long term sustainability of the lobster industry

larger lobsters to compete in the tail market; the food service sector tends to favor larger tails, thus the competition between *Homarus americanus* and the various warm water lobster tails.

Following the plant tour, I headed south again for Jean Lavallée’s product quality and handling session at the Elsipogtog First Nation. Lavallée leads the training and is both scientist and standup comedian as he explains the biology of a lobster as it pertains to the quality of the animal during hauling, on board the vessel, in storage at the wharf or shoreside and in shipment. I have attended and delivered several product quality trainings over the last couple of years as part of the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, but Lavallée’s deep knowledge of the biology of the lobster made this training particularly interesting and fun.

This trip which started out as a short training in Elsipogtog turned into something much greater. I had the opportunity to talk with several different members of the many conversations to improve the understanding of our respective fisheries and our ways of life are critically important to the success and long term sustainability of the lobster industry

Maine with our colleagues in the Maritimes. Having these important conversations to improve the understanding of our respective fisheries and our ways of life are critically important to the success and long term sustainability of the lobster industry and the communities that depend on it.
MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S COMMUNITY ALLIANCE:
Getting a handle on lobster quality

Product quality and handling. It’s the newest buzzword in the business—and with good reason. It is estimated that the Maine lobster industry loses about 20% of the product landed as a result of shrinkage. That 20% loss is felt through the entire supply chain and is factored into the boat price. Dealers base the boat price, in part, on what they expect to lose. Many people in the industry, from fishermen to live dealers to processors, have noted that as the volume of landings has increased over the last several years, the quality has decreased. The same is true for the Canadian Maritimes, which report an average shrinkage rate of 8-10%.

As everyone works faster in order to move higher volume, sound handling practices are easily overlooked. While the industry searches to improve profits, some of the volume and profit currently lost to shrinkage can be recouped through improved handling practices.

MLA and Maine Sea Grant recently offered a product quality and handling session as a component of the TAA program. “Over 800 TAA participants from Maine have taken that particular training, but one of the things that we heard loud and clear as we delivered the workshop was that everyone who handles a lobster in Maine should take the training. So now we want to go one step further and encourage the entire supply chain to participate,” explained program coordinator Annie Tselikis.

MLCA will be delivering a new lobster quality training this summer to fishermen, dock workers, dealers, truckers, processors and anyone else interested in participating. “At this time, it is really important that we do everything we can to get everyone in the industry on the same page with regard to handling practices,” explained Tselikis. “There seems to be a lot of inconsistency in the way the product is handled along the coast. Many fishermen are frustrated that they may take very good care of their lobsters, while the guy who lands right after is not nearly as careful. At the end of the day, the entire lot moves through the supply chain as a unit, so we’re all in this together. We want to create a system that rewards improved handling.”

MLCA will launch a new lobster quality program this summer to include a limited discussion of the lobster market, the economic impact of shrinkage, options for improving quality both on the boat and at the dock, and reasons to reduce shrinkage and to improve the marketability of the product.

In the fall, MLCA plans to partner with Jean Lavallee of Aquatic Science and Health Services of Prince Edward Island. Considered a preeminent lobster vet, Jean has delivered his training program nearly sixty times around Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland with great success. He will be available to offer further training and explain lobster biology as it pertains to the quality of the product. The ultimate goal of the program is to develop a voluntary certification system at the dock level that can be used as an additional marketing tool. “This is a positive step forward for all of us in the lobster industry right now,” said Tselikis.

Assume boat price of $3.50/lb; 90 pounds/crate

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A cracked carapace costs everyone money. Ensuring that the lobsters landed are in the best shape possible is one way to prompt a better price. MLA photo.

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