Landings, vol. 22, no. 4

Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance
Despite the best efforts of mediums and psychics, we still don’t have the ability to predict the future. Fishermen take note of what they observe at sea throughout the year as a means to forecast what they might see in years to come. Seeing lots of young lobsters in a trap usually indicates some good fishing years ahead. What scientists do isn’t much different. They survey the seafloor for lobsters and then use mathematics, computers and some very complicated equations to estimate how many young lobsters might survive to harvestable size. Those resulting models give marine resource managers the data on which to base regulatory decisions. But can those models accurately predict the future in the face of a changing Gulf of Maine?

Back in 2004, University of Maine scientist Rick Wahle and colleagues devised a mathematical model that linked the number of young-of-the-year lobsters (those born in that year) found in cobblestone nursery areas and the predicted abundance of legal-sized lobsters in the future.

Unlike other creatures, figuring out how many lobsters have passed from the larval to juvenile stage is tricky. In the first place, they hide. In the second, there’s not much to tell you how old a lobster is even if you find them because they shed their carapace so frequently when they are young. In 1989 and 1990, Wahle started sampling mid-coast Maine and Rhode Island to determine just how many juvenile lobsters had managed to find a hiding place in cobble undersea areas. He then took those data to devise a model that could predict the future abundance of legal-size lobsters in those areas. Wahle’s early sampling work expanded into the yearly American Lobster Settlement Index, conducted by collaborating marine resource agencies and industry members from Rhode Island to Atlantic Canada. Wahle’s lab at the University of Maine serves as the central data hub for the survey.

A 2004 paper authored by Wahle, Lew Incze and Michael Fogarty stated, “We developed a growth model that projects the impact of the observed settlement patterns on future fishery landings. The model incorporates variations in individual growth rates obtained from prior field and laboratory studies.” The authors used “empirical data on size-at-age to develop a logistic model providing the probability of attaining harvestable size (> 83 mm carapace length) at a given age. The projection model then combines the settlement index and growth model to estimate the contribution of each settlement year class to the fishery recruitment in subsequent years.” A subsequent paper published in 2009

Continued on page 11

Continued on page 18
After a remarkably cold and snow-filled winter, Maine lobstermen are beginning to ready their gear and themselves for another lobster fishing season. As the front page story in this month’s issue of Landings notes, 2013 was another year of strong lobster landings in the state. August 2013 was the single biggest month of landings on record, with nearly 33 million pounds harvested. But the tale of two Maine’s played out in the lobster industry, with downeast Maine posting another phenomenal year of landings lead by Hancock County (with nearly 45 million pounds), Knox County (with nearly 34 million pounds) and Washington County (with nearly 24 million pounds). Fortunately, the price paid per pound nudged slightly upward – here’s hoping it will continue in that direction this year!

The lobster industry has been full of surprises in recent years, with large volumes of lobster being landed at unexpected times. No one can truly say what the future may bring. This month Landings introduces us to scientists who are working hard to do just that when it comes to lobster. The use of predictive models allows scientists, resource managers and lobstermen alike to gain a sense of the timing of the catch each year and the abundance of the lobster resource in future years. All the environmental changes occurring in the Gulf of Maine, particularly warmer water temperatures, make fine tuning these models increasingly important. And as our industry has learned the hard way, these tools are not only critical in assessing the resource, but also in helping businesses plan appropriately for the upcoming season.

The annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum was held at the beginning of March. This year’s forum was well attended and once again proved invaluable in bringing together fishermen, scientists, and the public. Each year industry stakeholders are able to take stock of where we are right now and what might be in our future. In addition to covering a number of fisheries issues, this year’s forum provided a tremendous array of wellness events which include health screenings and health insurance enrollment. Landings provides an overview of the seminars and health events as well as highlights of the Saturday award ceremonies.

We’ve heard from many readers that you enjoy getting to know members of our lobstering communities through the pages of Landings. This month, we introduce you to Ernie Burgess of Chebeague Island, who was a young man when the Maine Lobstermen’s Association took form in 1954. He talks to Landings about the experiences of his father, Alger Burgess, and other MLA members during a federal investigation of the association in 1958, and why it is important to him to support the MLA.

Many worry about the lack of diversity in our fisheries, and Maine’s over reliance on the lobster fishery. As fisheries are rebuilt in Maine, so too is the opportunity to grow new business. Readers will find in this issue of Landings the story of a woman who sees a prosperous future in the Maine scallop fishery which, just a few years ago, was lagging. Togue Brawn of Portland brings a sense of enthusiasm and possibility to the scallop fishery through her young business, Maine Dayboat Scallops. Landings also provides important information to lobstermen on two NOAA research projects planned for this spring and summer. Beginning in May, NOAA will be deploying a series of buoys in Casco Bay to collect tidal and current information, and in July and August, the NOAA research vessel Ferdinand Hassler will be conducting a bottom mapping survey along the coast of York County.

As we look forward to the upcoming lobstering season, it is always wise to look back at the hard work of the generations before us. In our series Voices, this month we recount the story of a woman who sees a prosperous future in the Maine scallop fishery which, just a few years ago, was lagging. Togue Brawn of Portland brings a sense of enthusiasm and possibility to the scallop fishery through her young business, Maine Dayboat Scallops.
Maine Aqua Ventus, the offshore wind energy research project led by the University of Maine, will learn this summer if it has been selected by the U.S. Department of Energy for the next phase of funding. The proposed demonstration project will place two full-scale floating wind turbines at the University of Maine Deepwater Offshore Wind Test Site off Monhegan Island, and connect to both the island and mainland with undersea cables. The mainland destination is a Central Maine Power Company substation in Bristol. Although this is a modest, research-scale project, it has attracted a lot of attention from the nearby communities and the fishermen who work in the Muscongus Bay area. This concern is understandable, which is why members of the research team have met regularly with residents and fishermen to explain the project and gather input so that the final demonstration project can be informed by local knowledge.

Michael Dawson fishes out of New Harbor and is concerned about lobster traps getting entangled in the subsea cable. He also fishes for shrimp when there’s a season. Dawson, along with Randy Cushman (Port Clyde) and David Osier (South Bristol), is worried about losing good shrimp-towing areas. This is because it’s typical to require a closure to mobile gear within 50 meters on either side of a subsea cable. Jim Wotton fishes lobster and shrimp out of Friendship and also drags for scallops in the upper part of the bay. He is troubled about the possibility of losing scallop area. And out at Monhegan, the lobstermen are concerned with how close they can fish to the wind turbines.

That’s a sampling of some of the issues that have been discussed in recent months. Understandably, there are lots of questions, yet through our ongoing discussions, a lot of the issues are being resolved. Furthermore, the project is all the better for having this input. This isn’t the first cable that’s been installed along Maine’s coast. Many of the year-round island communities are connected to the mainland power grid in this fashion, but this is new to the guys fishing in Muscongus Bay and they’ve got concerns.

During this past year, Damian Brady from the Darling Marine Center, University of Maine Vice President for Innovation and Economic Development Jake Ward, and I have held forums and community meetings throughout the mid-coast region to answer questions and get feedback. It hasn’t always been easy, but the university is committed to minimizing the impact on fisheries while pursuing this renewable energy technology as part of the long-term solution to environmental impacts from our current fossil-fuel-based energy industry. I’ve worked with Maine’s fishing industry most of my life and I know, without a doubt, that these discussions over time are absolutely critical for the communities and for the project.

The first time I met Michael Dawson, he really didn’t have much to say, except he wished we’d simply go away and let him fish. Mike’s no fool. He’s the chair of the Lobster Zone D Council and knows how to look out for this fishery. Since that first meeting, he’s gained a better understanding of the pilot project. He’s still not happy, but he, David, Jimmy and Randy continue to provide critical input. They are helping the project engineers understand how these fisheries work, what the bottom habitat is, and other local information that will help to ensure that the project is done right.

Similarly, the first time I met David Osier, he graciously invited me into his wheelhouse. After blowing my mind with a harrowing tale of a not-so-good fishing day earlier that week which could have cost him his boat, he began scribbling shrimp tows on a nautical chart. He’s no fan of this project, but he’s willing to share his knowledge and maybe demonstrate, in the end, that this perceived conflict is manageable. I did the same thing with Randy Cushman from the eastern side of the bay last fall; the combination of his and other notes has given the project engineers a lot to think about. There are options for where to place the cable and where it can make landfall. This group of fishermen will help the university explore those options in order to find common ground and the best possible plan that has the least impact.

Meanwhile, the Town of Bristol and Monhegan Island have organized community task forces to lead discussions with us. These community groups, which have their own Web sites, are critical to the long-term success of the project. Though it is a slow process, this is how the towns can be clear about what they need and the researchers can be clear about what is possible.

More information about Maine Aqua Ventus is online (maineaquaventus.com), or you can reach out to me directly via email (panderson@maine.edu) or phone (581-1435). We anticipate hearing from the Department of Energy this summer, but will continue to meet with the fishermen and community groups because we believe this is an important project and we want to do it right.
Ernie Burgess doesn't mince words. "I'm proud to be a member of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA)," the 70-year-old Chebeague Island lobsterman said emphatically. "I believe there is strength in numbers." As a young man, Burgess was witness to one of the major events in the MLA's history, the 1958 prosecution of the organization and its members by the federal Department of Justice on charges of price fixing.

"My father [Alger Burgess] was a del- egate back then. I remember him and the other fellows at the kitchen table. There were two delegates from Chebeague, from the eastern and the western neighborhoods," Burgess said. The MLA's structure was set up specifically to represent lobstermen from throughout the coast. Members of the board, now called directors, were charged with representing their particular stretch of the coast within the organization.

As a high school student, Ernie watched and listened to his father and other members of the fledgling MLA as the organization took shape. When, in 1958, the elder Burgess and other members were called to testify before the court, Alger and the other lob- stermen called to the stand didn't make the prosecutors' job particu- larly easy, Burgess said with a laugh. "They didn't give any direct answers. They were all playing dumb," he explained.

In his book The Great Lobster War, author Ronald Formisano covers that trial in detail. At one point, "Lobstermen have been kicked around for so long I don't remember anyone ever saying to me 'what do you have to get for your lobsters?' They always just tell you what the price is." Grossman asked Alger Burgess if it were true that MLA president Leslie Dyer never told him or anyone else that they had to do anything, refer- ring to the prosecution's accusation that the MLA had directed lobster- men to tie up their boats in order to raise the lobster price to 35 cents per pound. Burgess took his time reply- ing but finally, Formisano wrote, he said, "But the thing of it is I feel that we are still living in the United States and I don't have to have anybody tell me what I can do, not Leslie Dyer or these men here [the prosecuting law- yers] or you or anybody else, unless I am breaking the law and then I ex- pect it. But as I see it, I haven't broke no law of any kind, and I don't have to have anybody tell me what to do. I still hope that I am a free man."

In the end, the judge found MLA president Leslie Dyer and vice-presi- dent Rodney Cushing guilty. The two men received fines and the MLA was served with a consent decree prohib- iting from engaging in discussing lob- ster price or impacting lobster sup- ply. To this day Ernie Burgess speaks with admiration for Alan Grossman, the man who understood lobstermen and valiantly tried to prove the MLA innocent of the charges. "Grossman was not just a lawyer," Burgess ex- plained, "he was dedicated to helping lobstermen. He knew we were getting screwed. I don't know how they [the prosecuting law- yers] or you or anybody else, unless I am breaking the law and then I ex- pect it. But as I see it, I haven't broke no law of any kind, and I don't have to have anybody tell me what to do. I still hope that I am a free man."

Burgess worked in many different fisheries over the years, scalloping, shrimping, midwater trawling, gill- netting as well as lobstering. "This is my 61st year lobstering," he an- nounced proudly.

The world of lobstering has changed dramatically since his youth. "When I was a kid, everyone had a dealer they sold to. When it slowed down, in the fall and winter, just about everyone had to borrow money from the dealer- er for whatever, fix up your engine or something. The dealers had you. Some guys would starve to death before they'd borrow money, they were so damn independent," Burgess said. The situation is better now, in part because lobstermen have more choices. Burgess himself does more than lobster now. He was one of the original nine Chebeague Island lob-

Continued on page 17
NEW BUSINESS GIVES VALUE TO LOBSTER, SHELLFISH SHELLS

By Shelley Wigglesworth

It is not often that you find a business where everything from start to finish is done entirely in America which also uses discarded shells from Maine lobsters as a main component in its products. Eco-Sea Tiles, established in 2009, does all of this and more.

Mickey Shattow, an engineer by training, is founder and owner of the Eco-Sea Tiles Company in West Kennebunk. “A few years ago, I knew I wanted to make a durable tile product with shells and I wanted to do it easily, inexpensively and as eco-friendly as possible,” he said.

After a year of tinkering he had developed a tile that he was happy with. The tiles are composed of crushed shells molded with a simple epoxy mixture. Shattow uses mother-of-pearl, abalone, mussel, and oyster shells as well as crushed lobster shells in Eco-Sea Tile products. The shells come from sources all over the United States as well as other parts of the world, although Shattow was quick to point out that the majority of the lobster shells used in his products come from lobster harvested here in the Gulf of Maine.

The shells are washed, crushed and processed before being bagged and labeled for use in the production of tiles and other products. Production consists of molding the shells with an epoxy mixture into a selected form and drying. Everything from start to finish is done in a rented 1,000 square foot space within the old Twine Mill building on the Mousam River in West Kennebunk. The production work is done by four employees who come in at different intervals to produce tiles, countertops, and a whole line of other consumer products as well.

Eco-Sea Tiles makes drawer pulls, light fixture covers, picture frames, business card holders, wine stoppers, coasters, magnets, coffee travel mugs and more. The company even recently began creating the tiniest of shaped and molded seashells for artists and jewelers to work with.

“I started out with tiles, but I quickly began experimenting with other things. I am always open to new ideas and uses for my products,” Shattow said. “I’ve been amazed at how well everything has been received, and I am interested in potentially creating other stuff as well.”

The smaller items, such as coasters, drawer pulls, and picture frames, are sold to retail shops in the United States. Eco-Sea Tile’s products retail in the $15 to $30 range.

Always environmentally conscious, Shattow uses even the smallest amounts of leftover epoxy from production to create other items, such as heart- and spherical-shaped paperweights. “Nothing goes to waste here,” he said. He even wraps items for shipping in recycled newspaper.

Eco-Sea Tiles also purchases the backings for its popular seashell picture frames from Goodwill Industries, where the backs are made by people with disabilities. “I like to use and incorporate as many American resources as possible,” Shattow said. “Everything works together nicely that way.”

Lobster, oyster shells and other shells make up these heart-shaped trinkets. Photo by Shelley Wigglesworth.

Crushed shells take on a new life in Eco-Sea Tile products. Photo by Shelley Wigglesworth.
Health insurance open enrollment ended March 31. It’s been quite a whirlwind since October! We’ve seen the healthcare.gov Web site come a long way from its rocky start that month. Although the issues with healthcare.gov were discouraging and frustrating for many, we contin-ue to hear success stories from families that are using the site to finally secure affordable health insurance.

The Web site was improved in order to support heavy online traffic flow that culminated in March. People had from October, 2013 until the end of March to submit applications for health insurance. Those months were called the “initial open enrollment period.”

The Kaiser Family Foundation re-ported in January that 130,000 Maine residents were without health in-urance at that time. A survey conducted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in 2006 showed that among New England’s lobstermen, a whop-ping 25% had no health insurance for themselves or anyone in their house-holds; in some areas of Maine nearly 50% of lobstermen had no health insurance. Of the Maine lobstermen who did have health insurance, 25% had only catastrophic coverage.

The Affordable Care Act is intended to offer health insurance to those previously without it and to make the cost affordable by providing subsi-dies for policy premiums. In my role as a health insurance Navigator for the MLA, I’ve been fortunate to see people who have been without cover-age for 20 years enroll in an insurance plan that will give them security and peace of mind. I’ve also worked with families that have been able to switch to new coverage, leaving their old high-deductible, high out-of-pocket costs plan behind them. Under the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies must now offer plans that cap out-of-pocket expenses at $6,350 for an individual and $12,700 for a fam-ily.

If you enrolled from March 16 to March 31, your coverage will begin May 1. If your coverage starts May 1, you must make your initial pay-ment to the insurance company be-fore your coverage begins. Be sure to check with your company so you don’t miss the payment deadline.

If you don’t make your first premium payment before your coverage starts, your application will be dropped and you won’t be covered.

If you were asked to send proof of your income to the Maine Health Insurance Marketplace in order to qualify for a tax credit subsidy, be sure to do so within 90 days. Here are some examples of income proof you may use: Wages and tax statement (W-2); a pay stub or a slip from your lobster dealer; a copy of your self-em-ployment ledger; a lease agreement; a copy of a check paid to a household member. For example, if your adult child lives at home and contributes to the monthly mortgage, a check made payable to you should suffice.

Another form that’s acceptable is a bank or investment fund statement or proof of any kind of Social Security benefits. A document or letter from the Social Security Administration, a Form SSA 1099 Social Security benefits statement, or a letter from a government agency for unemployment benefits is also acceptable for income proof. If you don’t provide the requested information before the 90 days are up, the tax credit amount could be withdrawn. You would be responsible for paying the full price for a policy without subsidies.

The documents don’t necessarily need to be dated in 2014. For exam-ple, you can provide recent pay stubs if you don’t expect your income to change in 2014. If you expect your in-come to go up or down in 2014, you can provide other documents, like a document that states when contract work will end or a pay slip from your dealer. If any of your income comes from freelance work, you can fill out a self-employment ledger that includes your expected income.

Keep in mind that if you are still un-insured in April (and do not qualify for a special enrollment pe-riod) you could pay a tax penalty to the IRS when you pay your taxes next year. The next time you can enroll in the Health Insurance Marketplace is November, 2014. This open enroll-ment period will run for four months, and close in February, 2015.

If you have any questions, please call me at the MLA office at 967-4555.

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

Allen Insurance & Financial
Atlantic Edge Lobster
Beals-Jonesport Cooperative
Bell Power Systems Inc.
Buoysticks.com
Calendar Islands Maine Lobster LLC
Cape Porpoise Lobster Co. Inc.
Chapman & Chapman
Chase Leavitt & Co.
Chrisanda Corp.
Coastal Documentation
Conway Cove Lobster Co.
Cook’s Lobster House
Cousins Maine Lobster
Cushing Diesel, LLC
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Eaton Trap Co. Inc.
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Lake Permaquid Inc.
Linda Bean’s Maine Lobster
Lobster ME
Lobster Products Inc.
Lomie’s Hydraulic Inc.
Maine Financial Group
Maine Port Authority
Maine Sea Grant
Maine Water Authority
Midcoast Marine Electronics
Midcoast Marine Supply
Millers Wharf Lobster
Mount Desert Oce-anarium
Nautilus Marine Fabrica-tion Inc.
Newcastle Chrysler
Dodge Jeep
New England Marine & Industrial Inc.
Novatec Braids LTD
Penobscot Bay & River Preservation Assn.
Penobscot East Resource Center
Pete’s Marine Electronics
PBFB CPAs
PI Lobster Company
Polyform US
Port Clyde Fishermen’s Coop
Port Lobster Co.
Proms Saint John
Quahog Lobster Inc.
Ready Seafood
Red Hook Lobster Pound
Redeem Lobster Co.
Rockland Savings Bank
South Bristol Fishermen’s Cooperative
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Superior Marine Products Inc.
The Compass Insurance Group
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WD Matthews Machinery Co.
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Maine Lobstermen’s Association
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Advocating for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it since 1954.

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MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

STEAMING AHEAD

To V-notch or not to V-notch, that is the question. And it’s a question being asked by more and more lobstermen along the coast. According to data collected through the Department of Marine Resources’ sea sampling program, fewer and fewer lobstermen are V-notch ing each year. Statewide, the percentage of egg-bearing lobsters with a V-notch peaked in 2008, when 82% of those sampled were V-notch ed. That rate dropped to only 61% in 2013. The V-notch rate also varies significantly depending on where you fish. Zone F fared the best in 2013 with 70% of egg-bearing females notched while Zone A was the worst at only 30% V-notch ed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>2013 V-notch Rate</th>
<th>Peak V-notch Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<td>67%</td>
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<td>A</td>
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Source: DMR

I’ve heard lobstermen give lots of reasons why they are notching less these days. Some think that there are just too many V-notch ed lobsters on bottom and we simply don’t need anymore; others fear that the resource is at risk of disease because there are too many lobsters on bottom; others are just too busy to take the time to notch due to the volume of lobster being handled; others don’t feel that it is being enforced fairly so they have lost interest.

Maine’s chief lobster biologist, Carl Wilson, gave a presentation at the MLA annual meeting showing these declines in the V-notch rate recorded through the sea sampling program. Wilson explained that the V-notch rate now plays a key role in how scientists assess the lobster stock. When fewer female lobsters are observed with a notch, that data goes directly into the model. The MLA and DMR wanted these changes in how the lobster stock is assessed because they give weight to Maine’s long-standing conservation measure. They came about after much lobbying during the 1990s.

According to Wilson, Maine’s efforts to V-notch lobster really do matter in terms of the long-term abundance of lobster populations. DMR scientists used the V-notch ing data to run a few scenarios through the stock assessment model to see just how much it matters to the future of the stock.

While just a model which Wilson characterized as a “best guess,” it showed that a reduction in the V-notch rate could have dire impacts on the stock in future years.

Three scenarios were tested. The first (S1) assumed that the V-notch rate was the same as that observed from 2007 to 2013. This scenario predicted that the resource will peak within ten years and then stabilize over the long term. The second scenario (S2) assumed that lobstermen cut their rate of V-notch ing in half compared to the 2007 to 2011 period. This scenario resulted in a short- and medium-term decline in the resource, and a resource collapse within 30 years. The third scenario (S3) assumed that there is no V-notch ing and only eggers are being thrown back. This scenario resulted in a slightly faster resource collapse than the S2 version.

Now, we all know that many scientific predictions prove not to be true. But this prediction uses data collected in collaboration with Maine’s commercial lobstermen and uses a model that Maine’s lobster industry pushed for, the very model used in the current stock assessment which shows a healthy lobster resource! If lobstermen continue to choose not to V-notch, the lobster resource could be headed for a serious downturn.

Several generations of lobstermen diligently V-notch ed lobsters because they believed it was the right thing to do. They V-notch ed lobsters during lean years, when the landings were marginal and profits thin. Over many past decades, these lobstermen chose to sacrifice landing female lobsters because they wanted to ensure a healthy resource for the next generation. That goal didn’t happen quickly. It has taken many, many years to build the Maine lobster resource up to its current record level of abundance.

Now, many contend that since the lobster resource is at an historically high abundance, maybe it won’t matter if we slack off on V-notch ing for while. Well, what if you are wrong? What if this model prediction is right? Can we afford to take that chance?

The MLA has been a steadfast proponent of and advocate for V-notch ing. We even gave out V-notch tools as door prizes at the annual meeting this year to help promote V-notch ing. Previous generations of lobstermen made financial sacrifices on your behalf by V-notch ing lobsters, essentially putting some landings in the bank for the future.

Today’s lobstermen have that legacy to think about as well as the future well-being of their own children and grandchildren. Nothing lasts forever, so please, keep Maine’s V-notch ing tradition strong. You are the ones who can conserve this amazing lobster resource for the next generation.

As always, stay safe on the water.

M A I N E  L O B S T E R M E N ’ S A N N U A L M E E T I N G

More than one hundred members of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) filled the room at the Samoset Resort in Rockport for the organization’s annual meeting on February 28, at the start of the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. MLA president David Cousins introduced the current board of directors and thanked four outgoing board members -- Michael Myrick of Cushing, Brad Parady of Kittery, Shane Carter of Bar Harbor and Brian McLain of New Harbor -- for their service to the industry.

MLA executive director Patrice McCarron reviewed changes made to MLA bylaws and policies. The number of board members has been capped at 21; she reminded members that only licensed Maine commercial lobstermen who are members in good standing can vote or serve on the MLA board. The election procedures have been clarified; MLA members elect board members; nominations from members close in February; no nominations will be accepted from the floor during the annual meeting. She reiterated that all board meetings are open to all MLA members as well as the public. Board membership emphasizes diversity of age and geography; all directors are required to attend at least four board meetings each year.

Continued on page 8
Dwight Carver, Jason Joyce, and Donny Young, of whom are currently serving on the board, were this year’s nominees for three-year terms.

Clayton Howard called for a motion to close the nomination process; the motion was seconded. He then called for a motion to accept the slate of candidates; the motion was seconded; unanimous vote in favor.

Patrice gave an overview of MLA activities to date. “It’s been a hard year,” she said. “We’ve had to deal with difficult issues. I want to recognize the board for their hard work.” She noted the benefits that MLA members receive from their membership: the 24-page monthly newspaper Landings which is now published by the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance; an e-weekly including a summary of lobster news headlines and a weekly newsletter which is now published by the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance; and the MLA Web site and Facebook page.

In addition, the MLA is involved in projects that directly benefit lobstermen, such as the TAA program through which 1,860 Maine lobstermen completed a business plan, bringing $5.6 million to Maine’s lobstermen, such as the TAA program through which 1,860 Maine lobstermen completed a business plan, bringing $5.6 million to Maine’s lobstermen. She noted that the lobster marketing bill posed suggested closures and gear marking requirements and agreed to trawling up measures by zone in federal waters, and 1/3 mile exemption areas around islands. Patrice noted that the latest right whale stock assessment showed that injuries and mortality attributed to fishing averaged 1.5 portions per whale, whereas the law allows an average of less than one whale per year.

Two proposed dredging projects in Searsport have increased concern among fishermen and local residents. Some of the spoils from dredging around the ship piers at Sears Island have shown contamination, and the application has been withdrawn. The state-sponsored proposal to dredge a 40-foot channel in Searsport has undergone several studies including a Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment. The spoils at this site are being tested to determine if they are within federal standards established under the Clean Water Act and are proposed to be disposed of at the Penobscot Bay disposal site. To date, these projects are still under review and no permits have been issued. The MLA is continuing to review information on the projects and has requested a meeting geared toward answering concerns voiced by fishermen.

David Couzens made a motion to waive reading of last year’s minutes; the motion was seconded; unanimous vote in favor.

The door prize winners were: Tad Miller of Matinicus; Jack Young of Vinalhaven; TJ. Faulkingham of Belfast; Jim Henderson of Saco; Sonny Beal of Sebasco Beach; Jerry Doughty of Vinalhaven; Dan Staples of Cushing; Willis Spear of Islesford; David Black of Belfast; Luke Reynolds of Spruce Head; and Charlie Rosen of Vinalhaven; Dave Thomas of Islesford; David Black of Belfast; Dan Staples of Cushing; Willis Spear of Yarmouth; Jason Hooper of South Thomaston.

The MLA board members at a recent meeting. Photo by Annie Tselikis.
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing on LD 1830 An Act To Promote Rockweed Habitat Conservation through the Consideration of No-harvest Areas. The bill proposes that the state’s seaweed management plan use the impact of rockweed harvesting on conserved lands as a criteria, in addition to other requirements. The MLA strongly opposed setting a precedent that ties the impacts of marine resource harvest to impacts on privately held land.

LD 1678 An Act To Protect Maine’s Lobster Fishery, which proposed to prohibit the use of methoprene and resmethrin if the chemical would enter the waters of the Gulf of Maine, was not approved by the Legislature. Instead, the Committee sent a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in support of the plan to convene an Environmental Risk Advisory Committee (ERAC) to look at all pesticides and assess potential adverse impacts of pesticide use on the state’s lobster resource. The MCP will collaborate with DMR to identify high priority areas for sampling to identify which pesticides are most prevalent in the marine environment. The MLA will participate in the ERAC and strongly supports this work. This research should serve as the basis of future regulations to reduce the risk of pesticides to commercial fisheries.

The Marine Resource Committee supported an amended LD 1602 to establish a committee to study the effects of ocean acidification on Maine’s marine resources. The resolve establishes a 16-member committee “to identify the scientific data and knowledge gaps that hinder Maine’s ability to craft policy and other responses to coastal and ocean acidification and prioritize the strategies for filling those gaps and to provide policies and tools to respond to the adverse effects of coastal and ocean acidification on commercially important fisheries and Maine’s shellfish aquaculture industry,” and to seek funding to complete this work. The commission will provide a report, including suggested legislation, by December 5. The MLA supports this effort.

No action has been taken on LD 1544, An Act To Address Entry into Lobster Management Zones. The Committee is awaiting feedback from the DMR Commissioner following outreach meetings with the lobster industry this winter. The Marine Resources Committee identified three major issues of concern: 1) latent effort; 2) long waiting lists; and 3) the need to minimize the impact of potential landings decline based on decline in the lobster settlement index.

TAU UPDATE

There is still no official word on the amount or timing of the final payment due to those who completed all components of the TAA program. MLA remains in frequent contact with officials from the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), the agency working to finalize and distribute the payment. Due to unforeseen issues, the appeal process has been ongoing and will not be finalized until all outstanding cases are closed. While this process is nearing completion, the MLA has been told that it’s unclear when it will be finalized. Final payments will be routed directly into TAA participants’ bank accounts on file with the county Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices.

The final payment, or true up payment, will be paid to those who completed the full TAA program by dividing up the funds left over as a result of those who did not complete the full program. This means that FAS must have the final numbers on how many have completed each phase of the program, and how many participants have completed the full program and qualify for a "true-up" payment to be paid out from the balance of funds. MLA will notify all TAA participants via email, and through the newsletter, when the final payment is issued.

MLA MEETS NEW NOAA LEADER

In January, Eileen Sobeck was named assistant administrator for the National Marine Fisheries, replacing Samuel Rauch who served as the assistant administrator since 2012. Mr. Rauch will return to his previous position as deputy assistant administrator for Regulatory Programs. As assistant administrator, Sobeck will oversee the management and conservation of recreational and commercial fishery, the protection of marine mammals, and coastal fisheries habitat within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. NOAA Fisheries employs 4,800 people in five regional offices, six science centers, and twelve laboratories in fifteen states and U.S. territories.

Representatives from the MLA met with Ms. Sobeck and her staff during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. MLA provided an overview of the status of Maine’s lobster fishery and raised concerns about the whale plan, lack of funding for research, and the status of the shrimp fishery. MLA stressed the need for NOAA to more inclusive of stakeholders and responsive to their concerns.

Early in her career, Sobeck worked in the NOAA Office of General Counsel from 1979 to 1984. She next served at the U.S. Department of Justice, Environment, and Natural Resources Division from 1984 to 2009. She recently served as acting assistant secretary of the Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs and deputy assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior since 2009. Ms. Sobeck has a law degree from Stanford.

DMR OUTREACH MEETINGS

DMR Commissioner Pat Kelly kicked off in March a series of outreach meetings with the lobster industry. The meetings are part of his commitment to bring information to the industry and have a dialogue about potential changes and are designed to follow up on industry discussions begun last year. The meetings agenda includes a review of the 2013 Lobster Settlement Survey which shows a decline in lobster set-tlement over the last three years, other scientific monitoring information, and an update on shell disease resources. The discussion is intended to set the stage for discussion of developing a Fisheries Management Plan for the lobster fishery. The final of the eleven meetings was held in early April.

PENOBSCOT RIVER CLOSURE

The DMR held a public hearing on March 17 to hear comment from stakeholders on the small closure in the Penobscot River. No one at the public hearing testified against the closure.

DMR OFFICE UPDATE

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HERRING ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS

Herring Annual Catch Limits (ACL) for 2014 have been adjusted to account for catch overages and under-harvest in 2012. After deducting the overages and adding the carry-over amount to the sub-ACLs, the total catch available to the herring fleet is reduced by 477 metric tons.

2014 HERRING QUOTAS (MT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2014 Adjustment</th>
<th>2014 Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area 1A</td>
<td>31,200</td>
<td>33,967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area 1B</td>
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<td>3,016</td>
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<td>40,675</td>
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THE MLA WORKS FOR YOU
ster in 2013 was $364 million, a $22 million increase over 2012 and $30 million over 2011.

For the first time, the department is reporting bonuses received by lobster harvesters which, while they only include reports from 17 of Maine’s 19 co-ops, total over $14 million. “While this figure is not complete, it does provide a better indication of the overall economic benefit of this fishery,” said Keliher. Added to the overall landed value, the bonus figure brings the total to more than $378 million. The Department reports that there were 7,320 commercial fishermen in 2013, and of those 4,239 were active commercial lobster harvesters. Lobstermen credit conservation measures for keeping the fishery healthy at a time when the region’s groundfish – cod, haddock and other species – have been decimated by overfishing.

2013 FISHERY STATISTICS

2013 Lobster Landings by County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Landings (in lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>12,041,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>43,906,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>33,625,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>6,083,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagadahoc</td>
<td>2,077,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldo</td>
<td>688,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>23,666,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>3,865,287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2013 Top Ten Ports By Ex-vessel Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Port</th>
<th>Value (in $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stonington</td>
<td>48,940,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>31,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinalhaven</td>
<td>30,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beals</td>
<td>15,080,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockland</td>
<td>14,850,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>13,020,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spruce Head</td>
<td>11,370,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonesport</td>
<td>11,220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Clyde</td>
<td>9,040,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Harbor</td>
<td>8,900,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maine Active Commercial Harvesters 2013

- Lobster/crab: 4,239
- Soft shell clams: 1,749
- Eel: 759
- Marine worms: 652
- Periwinkle: 613

2013 Landings continued from page 1

MLA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail with payment to: MLA, 203 Lafayette Center, Kennebunk, ME 04043

Please Print:

Name: ______________________________________________________

Business Name: _______________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________

City/State/Zip: _________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________ Cell: ____________________________

Email: _______________________________________________________

(If you would like to receive weekly e-news updates and lobster, bait & fuel prices)

Boat Name: __________________________________________________

Lobster License #: __________ Zone & Dist _______________________

Family Members:

$225 Highliner

$125 Harvester

$200 Harvester Family

$65 Junior/Senior Harvester

$50 Friend of the MLA

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- Transmit/display four frequencies simultaneously
- Pinpoint target species, reduce bycatch
- Variable beam angles with broadband transducers
- Condition Memory for instant recall of 24 favorite frequencies
- Rugged, reliable, professional grade

KODEN CVS-FX1

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Order# 173676
CAT I AUTO
PW-406-15T
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Reg 2799
Order# 943829

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Steel Toe Black
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C11K-3550

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reg.
$49
pair

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- Blue, green, orange, pink, red, white and yellow.
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Steel Toe Black
C11K-3500
C11K-3550

$449
pair
$499
pair

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BOMAR

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- Flush, watertight, 4-dog system, opens from the outside only.

15” x 24”
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OLI-821
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- 50+ Mile
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Accutech Marine Propeller, Inc.  Dover, NH -- 20% off propeller repair. Discounts vary by manufacturer for new propellers, shafting and other hardware.

Alkido Bay, Inc  Portland, ME -- No annual fees for 2014. 10% off annual fees in 2015.


Bessy Bait, LLC  Seabrook, NH -- $5 off each barrel on multiple barrel purchases at the Seabrook NH location with proof of MLA membership.

Coastal Hydraulics  Seabrook, NH -- 10% off on all stock items for MLA members.

Commercial Fisheries News  Deer Isle, ME -- Discounted annual subscription rate for $18.75 with MLA membership noted on check.

Craig’s All Natural  Durham, NH -- 10% discount on all Victoryoxx cat food.

Friendship Trap Company  Friendship, ME -- 5% off list price on traps at the Friendship store.

Hews Company  South Portland, ME -- 10% off haws, manrods, and other hydraulic components.

Law Office of J. Scott Logan, LLC  Portland, ME -- 20% discount on foreclosure defense and bankruptcy legal fees.

Maine Camp Outfitters  Sunset, ME -- 10% off all apparel and promotional product orders.

Maine Lobstermen’s Association  Kennebunk, ME -- 10% off to harvesters on MLA merchandise.

Maine Maritime Museum  Bath, ME -- Free admission to MLA members.

McMillan Offshore Survival Training  Belfast, ME -- 10% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training.

Mount Desert Oceanarium  Southwest Harbor, ME -- Free admission for commercial fishermen and their families.

National Fisherman  North Hollywood, CA -- Special annual subscription rate.

Nicholas H Walsh, PA  Portland, ME -- 25% off legal services.

North Atlantic Power Products  Exeter, NH -- 10% off service repairs of twin disc transmissions.

Penobscot Marine Museum  Searsport, ME -- Free admission for MLA members.

Sawyer & Whitten Marine  Portland & Rockland, ME -- 10% discount from regular MSRP pricing (doesn’t apply to sale items).

Sea Rose Trap Co.  Scarborough, ME -- 5% off trap list price when you show your MLA card.

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REMARKABLE PEOPLE:  

Togue Brawn, Portland

By Melissa Waterman

Togue Brawn exudes enthusiasm. She explains cheerfully that she has been described as “70 percent cheerleader and 30 percent Bobo’p” as she leads a visitor to her small upstairs office on Union Wharf in Portland. Brawn, 43, is the founder of Maine Dayboat Scallop, a one-person business that she established in 2011. From December to March, Brawn buys scallops from fishermen throughout the Maine coast. The scallops are shipped to customers within 24 hours of harvesting. Every week or so Brawn will drive to New York City to deliver fresh scallops to people who have placed advance orders with her. The company’s motto: “Taste what a difference a day makes!”

Brawn is passionate about her scallops. But the road to becoming a scallop buyer was a somewhat convoluted one, as Brawn rapidly explained. “I grew up in Cape Elizabeth and went off to Duke University,” she began. Brawn’s mother and father, Pat and Peter, were both teachers. Her father, also a registered Maine Guide, lobstered during the summer months. When Brawn graduated from Duke, she returned to Maine looking for a job. One day she saw an advertisement for a customer service position for seafood trade shows staged by Diversified Communications of Portland. One of the requirements was the ability to speak French. For a skill Brawn had mastered as an au pair in Switzerland. “I had to answer the phone in French, really bad French,” she laughed. Brawn soon moved into the company’s sales division where she thrived. Eventually her boss moved on to another trade show company in Ohio. “She wanted me to come to Ohio to work. She said if I worked for two years there she would move me to London!” Brawn explained. But after six months selling pharmaceutical and other types of trade shows to prospective clients, Brawn realized that she was miserable. “My dad saved me,” she said. Her father had invented a device called the bait cup which controlled the amount of bait available to lobsters and was easier to use than the traditional bait bag. Brawn signed on to be his salesperson. “I waited at J’s Oyster House because my dad couldn’t pay me. But I had a great time. I’d walk into a coffee shop somewhere like Jonesport with a lobster trap and the bait cup. Pretty soon guys would be coming up and asking about it,” Brawn recalled. “I’m good at selling someone else’s product if I know that I am doing someone a favor by introducing them to it.”

Ultimately her father’s enterprise folded. Brawn then opened up a lobster and clam cake cart on Commercial Street in Portland called “Togue’s Own” and continued waitressing at J’s Oyster House. At the same time she applied to several graduate schools to study fisheries. She decided to attend the University of Maine where she studied under economist Ralph Townsend. “He was a hard-ass economist,” Brawn explained. “I got three compliments from him the entire time I was there. He looked at economic efficiency in fisheries. He didn’t let emotion cloud things.”

With a Master’s degree in fisheries policy, Brawn looked for work in her field. She applied for positions in Alaska and Washington D.C., took a short-term job at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and consulted for the Massachusetts Fishermen’s Partnership. In 2007 she was hired for a contract position at DMR and then hired as the agency’s resource management coordinator. “And I found scallops,” Brawn said with a big smile.

Scallop fishing is work that many Maine fishermen depend on during the winter months. Managed by the state through recommendations from the Scallop Advisory Committee, the fishery had seen the typical boom and bust cycle over the years. Brawn saw in her job the potential to help make the scallop fishery stronger and more profitable in the long term. “Scallop fishers are so exposed and can have a tough life here on Georges!” she pointed out. “I thought this was a fishery we could turn around. It could be a multi-million dollar fishery for the state,” Brawn said. “It wasn’t happening because they were all ill-managed.”

She started attending Scallop Advisory Committee meetings in Augusta, bringing cookies and occasionally a supper of home-made clam cakes. She urged the committee to hold its meetings along the coast where the fishermen lived and arranged a DMR van for transportation. The committee eventually decided to cut the season for scallops, institute three year closures at selected sites along the coast and start an enhancement program to reseed scallop growing areas with spat.

“I loved the job because I was making a difference,” Brawn emphasized. “I love solving problems and I love the fishing industry. And I don’t mind conflict,” Brawn planned to work for the state for one year and then start her own business. That one year turned into four. When she left DMR in 2011 she cashed in her state pension fund and set up Maine Dayboat Scallops. The premise? “That people will pay more money for high-quality scallops harvested by known fishermen and that are delivered promptly after harvest. I wanted to get dragging more money for their scallops as divers,” she explained.

Brawn admits that in the beginning she didn’t really know what she was doing. But she stuck at it, forging relationships with scallop fishermen and piecing together orders for an expanding circle of customers. Brawn is determined to get as many people as possible to know what a truly fresh, unsouked scallop tastes like. So she travels to Brooklyn and Manhattan during the winter to deliver those scallops in person. “People have paid in advance for a certain amount, "sort of like a CSF [community supported fishery],” Brawn explained.

Regulations require scallops to be shocked at sea but Brawn successfully petitioned DMR to allow her to sell scallops on their shell. Brawn then took the live scallops-in-the-shell to chefs at high end restaurants in the state to drum up business for the new product.

A short mention of her company in the New York Times in February this year has brought Brawn a bounty of new business. “I’ve got to do a business plan,” she laughs. Most business people readily admit that the goal of their particular business is to make money. Not Brawn. “My goal is to change the fishery, to allow the fishermen to make more profit and keep it sustainable,” she emphasizes. “I want to see scallop licenses become more valuable than lobster licenses. You could make your whole living in the winter.”

And her name, Togue? “That name came about as a result of a late night chat her first year in college. When asked what she most wanted to accomplish in her life, Brawn answered simply: I want to catch a togue [a type of lake trout]. Over the years her Maine Guide father had brought his daughter on many a canoe trip and fishing expedition. On these trips he explained to Brawn that it was quite a feat to catch a togue and if she managed to do so, she would take it back to camp and stuff it with hamburger for supper! ’That’s what I wanted to do. I found out later that togue is a name used just in Maine, not elsewhere. And I adopted it,” she said. “I still haven’t caught one though.”

“Want to see scallop licenses become more valuable than lobster licenses. You could make your whole living in the winter.”

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Maine Dayboat Scallops Inc.

207-838-1490

togue@mainedayboatscallops.com

www.mainedayboatscallops.com

For several years, Brawn has provided fresh raw scallops at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum reception. Mike Young photo.
NOAA BEGINS UPDATE OF TIDE DATA THIS SUMMER

by Melissa Waterman

The Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS), part of NOAA's National Ocean Service, provides science and technical expertise to monitor, assess, and distribute tide, current, water level, and other coastal oceanographic products. It collects tidal current information to maintain and update the predictions in U.S. Tidal Current Tables. Mariners rely on this information to plan for safe and efficient maritime transportation. Every year CO-OPS deploys dozens of current meters in multiple locations around the country. CO-OPS intends to conduct an oceanographic observation project beginning in early May in Casco Bay, Portland harbor and Kennebec River to update predictions found in NOAA’s Tidal Current Tables. "The trick to collecting data in Casco Bay is to avoid the lobster pots and lines yet position the sensors or platforms in areas to capture currents representative of the channels," explained Karen Earwaker, CO-OPS oceanographer.

In the old days before the advent of computers, tidal current data were collected using either a current pole or a Ticus current meter in Casco Bay. The current pole used to determine the velocity of the current was about three inches in diameter and 15 feet long. It was weighted at one end to float upright with the top about one foot out of water. As the current carried it away, direction was noted from the ship’s compass and speed was determined by the amount of line passing from the vessel during a specific time interval. The Ticus current meter used a radio-telemetered buoy system to record current speed and direction.

The tide charts for these areas in Maine are based on data gathered in 1942-43 and the 1970s. This year underwater stations will be established in an area from the southeastern inlet at Saco River into Portland harbor, around the islands in Casco Bay, and up the Kennebec River to Richmond. The stations will remain there for at least 35 days. A new tidal reference station will be established at the entrance to Portland; that station will be deployed for at least 70 days.

Self-contained acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCP) will gather tidal data. These profilers are housed in bottom mounts or submersible buoys that float below the water surface. Bottom mounts stand less than a meter high and will have no buoys at the surface marking their location. Data will be collected every six minutes and will profile all of the water column. In addition to currents, the ADCP collects water temperature, echo intensity (backscatter) and pressure readings. At deployment and recovery, a conductivity (salinity), temperature, and depth (CTD) cast will be made at each location.

The tidal current project will take place throughout the summer. Between May 7 and 16, CO-OPS will deploy 13 stations, primarily around Portland and Casco Bay. In June, a second round of stations will be deployed between June 14 and 27, and the first 12 stations recovered. Between July 28 and August 12, CO-OPS will recover the final 13 stations, including the new reference station off Portland. The updated tidal data will be available to the public beginning in 2015 at tidesandcurrents.gov.

For additional information, contact project leader Carl Kammerer, at e-mail: carl.kammerer@noaa.gov, office: 603-862-3285, cell: 301-908-1545.
BENTON CELEBRATES ANNUAL ALEWIFE RUN

by MLA staff

The alewives are coming! And the town of Benton, Maine, is getting ready for them.

Come spring the silvery fish make their way from the Gulf of Maine up the Kennebec River into the Sebasticook River in Benton. But for decades alewives couldn’t make it that far due to the presence of dams. Once the Fort Halifax Dam in Vassalboro, Burnham, and Benton via the presence of fish ladders. The annual Benton Alewife Festival on May 17 focuses on the spring alewife harvest and the successful reconstruction of the Benton dam fish ladder. In 2013 observers counted nearly 2 million alewives traversing the dam. This year the festival is associated with World Fish Migration Day, an international day to create awareness about the link between fish and the free and open rivers they need for migration.

“The focus on the Benton Alewife Festival really is about the importance of alewives to the Maine ecosystem and the lobster industry,” said Pat Turlo, Benton town clerk and a festival organizer. People can observe the alewives running up the fish ladder, enjoy free smoked alewives, and watch birds of prey demonstrations, among many other events.

The Benton Alewife Festival takes place at the Benton Family Fun Park at 269 Neck Road in Benton and is free to the public. Shuttles will be available to take people to the dam to see the alewives.

People watch alewives climb the fish ladder as they migrate upstream. Photo courtesy Town of Benton.

“Burgess continued from page 4

stem who formed the Dropping Springs Lobster Company in 2004 in order to sell their catch directly to customers without any middlemen. The company quickly went into the bait business as well. Burgess still serves on Dropping Spring’s board.

Burgess says. "As I get older I realize that people have so many different attitudes toward how to accomplish things. I think the MLA is doing a good job despite all the different opinions." Burgess said. "Lobstermen have been kicked around for so long. I don’t remember anyone ever saying to me "what do you have to get for your lobsters?" They always just tell you what the price is," he said.

Burgess remains an MLA member in part because of the people who direct the organization. "We’ve had great people running it. Ed Blackmore, what a great guy," Burgess said. "You know, politically when something comes up in Augusta and it is bad for lobstermen, the MLA is always there. Christ, Ed practically lived there. David Cousens, too, he’s always there and when they see him, they know what he stands for." Burgess thinks that younger lobstermen should take part in the organization for their own benefit. "[The MLA] is the most important voice we have to protect the resource, to keep draggers from landing lobsters," Burgess continued. "As I get older I realize that people have so many different attitudes toward how to accomplish things. I think the MLA is doing a good job despite all the different opinions," Burgess said.

Burgess continued from page 4

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In 2009, the company decided to expand its business further. It formed Calendar Islands Maine Lobster to produce ready-to-eat lobster products. "We would bring our lobster straight from Dropping Springs and add value to them [through processing into Calendar Island products]," Burgess said. The company, which also buys and sells whole lobsters and frozen tails, has expanded its offerings consistently during the past five years.

It’s all part of Burgess’ belief that lobstermen need to act together to ensure a good price for their lobsters. "Lobstermen have been kicked around for so long. I don’t remember anyone ever saying to me "what do you have to get for your lobsters?" They always just tell you what the price is," he said.

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by Wahle, Fogarty, and Mark Gibson from the Rhode Island Department of Marine Fisheries accurately projected the number of lobsters about to enter the fishery on the basis of the settlement index and an added variable, shell disease prevalence. "Shell disease strongly influences natural mortality rates of lobster in southern New England," Wahle explained.

This was a big deal in the world of lobstering. No one had linked settlement density to future abundance before. "We may not have a crystal ball, but we're encouraged by our success in southern New England, and are now putting the predictive tool to the test in the Gulf of Maine," Wahle said.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) uses a complicated mathematical model to provide a picture of the Gulf of Maine lobster population.

"We use a length-based approach instead of the more common age-based approach because lobsters cannot be easily or cheaply aged at present," explained Genevie Nesselage, senior stock assessment scientist at the ASMFC, in an email message. "We use what we know about lobster life history along with data collected on their molting process to determine how quickly we expect them to grow and reach both maturity and legal size."

In addition to growth, ASMFC uses other data to flesh out its lobster stock model. The major sources of data used to predict abundance come from landings data, port and sea sampling data, travel surveys and ventless trap surveys conducted each year.

"The model essentially looks at how many lobsters were harvested, how many likely died from natural causes and how many were caught in the surveys," Nesselage explained. "Then it figures out how many lobsters should have been in the population in order to have produced the catch documented in the landings and the surveys." The Commission's model is peer-reviewed by a panel of independent experts before it is put into use.

The model is both sex- and season-specific to account for the complexities of lobster biology and the seasonality of both lobster migration and the fishery itself. Changes in minimum and maximum size regulations and the impact of conservation measures (such as V-notching egg-bearing females) are also accounted for in the model.

One intriguing aspect of the ASMFC's lobster stock model is the ability of managers to alter it in response to reality. "The assessment uses a process called 'statistical model fitting,'" Nesselage said. "This means we fine tune our model estimates of important things like abundance and fishery vulnerability by comparing model outputs with real data to see how good our model is at predicting what has been observed in real life."

The model is constructed with a series of assumptions built into it, elements such as the initial size of the lobster population or the ratio of males to females. Then scientists compare what the model predicts is out at sea with actual data provided by state resource agencies and the lobster industry. "We repeat this procedure numerous times until we have a model that predicts as closely as possible the observed landings and survey catch by length, sex, and season," said Nesselage. "The model estimates look anything like the real data, we know our model is way off the mark," Nesselage continued. If the model produces results that compare to the actual data reasonably well, ASMFC can feel confident that its management decisions can be based on the model.

But what happens if some of the assumptions built in to the model can no longer be taken as given? How can such a model incorporate some of the worrying changes lobsters and others are seeing in the Gulf of Maine, such as consistently warmer temperatures at both the sea surface and at depth? "We are in the process of incorporating climate change into our upcoming assessment. The exact way we will do that in the model is still undecided, so I can't give you the details just yet," Nesselage said.

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) in Portland is one institution tackling the question of how climate change is affecting Gulf of Maine species, specifically lobster. Kathy Mills, an associate research scientist at GMRI, and Andy Pershing, GMRI chief scientific officer, are linking ocean temperature data from 2012 to lobster phenology (the timing of life events in plants or animals). By anyone's estimate, 2012 was a hot year in the Gulf of Maine. Air temperatures in Maine hit 80 degrees in March. The sea surface for the entire East Coast, from Hatteras to Nova Scotia, was the warmest it had been in one hundred years. That warmth led to an unprecedented early molt for the Gulf of Maine's lobsters, shifting in the period of the harvest, and general tumult in both prices and the marketplace.

But a less-obvious warming had begun long before. The Gulf of Maine has warmed about 1 degree C (1.8o F.) over a period of 40 years prior to 2004. Warming accelerated drastically after 2004, according to research conducted by Pershing; there has been about a 1 degree increase every four years since then. In fact, Pershing notes, Gulf of Maine sea surface temperatures have increased faster than 99.85 percent of the global ocean.

Mills and her colleagues may have the means to forecast certain aspects of the lobster fishery on a seasonal basis. Drawing on ocean temperature and landings data, they have devised a prototype predictive model. "It's a simple relationship between sea surface temperature and the lobster stock. We have been able to predict whether it's going to be above or below 20 meters, and when the fishery landings start to ramp up each summer," Mills explained. "Now we are pursuing funding to develop a more rigorous model that is built on bottom temperatures and incorporates molt timing."

Mills began looking at the link between sea temperature and lobster landings after 2012. "It was an eye-opening year," she said. "We started putting the environmental data together with the biological data [on lobster], Lobster molt phenology is so linked to temperature. Lobsters begin to shed their old shells and form new ones in direct response to the temperature of the surrounding water. Warmer water leads to an earlier molt."

"So far we found that temperatures at the end of April and early May give us the ability to predict the start of the period of high fishing, and we anticipate that we will have even better forecasting skill if we incorporate molt timing into the model," Mills said. Typically the time of peak landings in Maine is in August and September. In 2012, landings started to increase sharply in June, peaking in July. "Warming [in the Gulf of Maine] began three weeks ahead of schedule. Landings shifted earlier on a similar schedule," Mills said.

The shift in landings that year produced an abundance of lobster at a time when both Canadian and U.S. seafood processors were unprepared. The price plummeted on both sides of the border, creating political and economic turmoil. Mills acknowledged that her model only reflects links between temperature, lobster phenology, and how landings respond to the spring molt. "The social and economic side plays out less predictably but the ability to adapt is greater. [Businesses] can learn and adapt for next year. So the information we think we can provide through a forecast like ours should provide them with advance planning capacity," she said.

There are many more things that can be forecast, Mills continued, once the model can draw upon spatial variability, bottom temperatures, and molt patterns. "Getting the links from the parts linked to one another at appropriate scales gives a greater predictive capacity," she said. "Providing this information in a form that industry can use is very important, as is getting observations from the field. We want to have a conversation with industry about how this forecast can best reflect their experience and how we can best deliver information that they need and can use."
By Wanda Curtis

A group of 20 students from University of Southern Maine’s undergraduate nursing program provided free blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol screenings for 138 fishermen at the 2014 Maine Fisherman’s Forum.

“The students work in partnership with a specific community, in our case, the Casco Bay Fishing and Island Community Partnership,” said associate professor emeritus Jan Burson, who co-organized the university’s community health program (featured in the February 2014 Landings). “The issues of difficult access to health care, high-risk occupations, and lack of health insurance are common in our community and are what drew us to work with this population to start. We teach the student nurses that the key to public health nursing is to respond to the needs of the community, as expressed by the community. That is what led us to the Fishermen’s Forum.”

This year the students saw the largest number of fishermen to date. A total of 138 individuals had blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol screenings. Of those screened, 59 individuals (43%) had elevated blood pressure.

According to the American Heart Association, one in three Americans suffers from high blood pressure. Of those, slightly more than 47% do not have it controlled. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80, according to the National Institutes of Health. This means that the force of blood when your heart beats is 120, and the force is 80 when your heart relaxes between beats. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, refers to blood pressure that is 140/90 or higher. High blood pressure is one of the leading causes of strokes and heart attacks.

“Most were mild to moderate elevations, but one was dangerously high,” explained Burson. “Of the 59 with elevated blood pressure, 16 (18% of the total) were on blood pressure medications, but their blood pressure was still elevated outside normal limits. For those folks and those with mild or moderate elevations, we advocated sharing these findings with their primary care provider, if there was one, at their next visit. If the person had no primary care provider, the student nurses informed them about clinics offering low-cost or free care such as Partnership Support Services (profiled in the January 2014 Landings), 90 individuals were screened for hearing loss. Diane Tingas, a Maine hearing instrument specialist affiliated with Massachusetts Audiology, conducted the screenings. “Diane found an array of results,” Athos said. “Some people who thought they had a hearing problem did not but found they had problems hearing high or low tones.”

Some people who took advantage of the hearing tests found that they did indeed need to see a specialist and were referred to someone for a follow-up appointment. A few people wondered about a condition called tinnitus [a persistent ringing or buzzing sound in the ears]. Those in which tinnitus was confirmed also were referred to a specialist for follow-up. “And, best of all,” Athos continued, “some people emerged from the screening with feedback that their hearing was just great! Either way, they now had information that they did not have before. It was convenient, it was important and it was free!”

Athos added that she was glad her organization had the opportunity to provide these screenings at the Forum.

continued on page 21

FOR SALE

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The MLMC will start out by promoting Maine lobster’s sweet flavor to chefs, upscale hotel and restaurant chains, seafood buyers and journalists. It has established a partnership with the Culinary Institute of America and will take part in the Institute’s Food Arts Greystone Flavor Summit in April. The event, held in California, brings a select group of food and beverage executives and high-level chefs together to explore food trends. Lacroix emphasized that increasing demand for Maine lobster will be a task shared by the Collaborative and lobstermen themselves. “This marketing effort depends on industry. We can’t do it alone,” she said.

Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Kellicer kicked off the first of ten meetings with the state’s lobstermen on Saturday morning. In January, 2013, Kellicer held 16 meetings along the coast to discuss with lobstermen issues such as long waiting lists for lobster licenses and low prices. This year the focus was on the future: what will happen if the lobster stock drops? If more lobstermen fish harder? If lobster shell disease becomes more prevalent? “Don’t think that I’m saying that the sky is falling and we’ve got to do something right now,” Kellicer said to polite laughter. “We just need to talk about how to be better prepared for a future downturn.”

DMR lobster biologist Carl Wilson presented an overview of the agency’s different monitoring programs for lobster. The information gained from these programs shows that the shift in lobster abundance from western to eastern Maine waters that began over a decade ago shows no signs of stopping. For example, Zone A (from the Canadian boundary to Schoodic peninsula) landed 28 million pounds of lobster last year; Zone E (from Pemaquid Point to Small Point) landed just 6 million. As Arnie Gamage, a Zone E lobsterman, commented about his area, “We are in the empty zone.”

Wilson noted that surface water temperatures in the region were lower in 2013 and thus far in 2014 than in 2012 when the entire western Atlantic Ocean experienced record-breaking highs. So he expects a normal lobster season this year, unless the spring water temperatures become unusual. Lobster shell disease, however, remains on the upsurge. “The disease, which erodes a lobster’s shell into ugly holes and patches, is thought to be due to common bacteria found in the ocean that combine to attack the animal’s carapace. Lobster shell disease has run rampant through southern New England lobster stocks where now approximately 30% of all landed lobsters have the disease, according to Wilson. In 2013 the number of diseased lobsters in Zone G jumped to 4% of all lobsters sampled by DMR; in Zone F that number rose to 3%. “In 2012 we saw a big bump [in percentages],” Wilson said. “We are starting to get into exponential growth.”

In addition, the number of juvenile lobsters on the bottom has dropped in most zones. DMR staff sample juvenile settlement at 50 sites along the coast in October and November every year. This provides data on the individual year class, i.e., how many larvae managed to grow enough to settle on the sea floor that year. “Generally speaking, most zones are seeing a three-year decline,” Wilson said. That could translate into a decline in landings in the future. On the other hand, the trawl surveys conducted by DMR in the spring and fall months indicate that there has not been much of an increase or decrease in lobster abundance along the coast west of Port Clyde. “Above Port Clyde to Schoodic the numbers went way up. From Schoodic to Lubec it was flat,” Wilson said.

The question facing the state, said Kellicer, is how to be prepared for change. Maine’s lobster fishery takes place within the context of a larger lobster management plan developed and enforced by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASFiMC). The ASFiMC lobster management plan has set a threshold for Maine: if lobster landings hit that threshold, then ASFiMC will step in. “The ASFiMC trigger for closure is 35 million pounds. Do you want to wait until landings are at 35 million pounds to do something?” Kellicer queried. Thus DMR is developing its own fisheries management plan for lobster this year. “We can set our own triggers for action long before ASFiMC comes in,” Kellicer said. “We need to be prepared. We want to preserve the diversity of the fleet.”

Coping with a changing ocean was the focus at a Saturday seminar on ocean acidification, Bill Mook, founder and president of Mook Sea Farm in Walpole, spoke of the effect an increasingly acid ocean is having on the oysters and other shellfish he raises on the Damariscotta River. More carbon dioxide in the atmosphere translates into more carbon dioxide in the ocean where, through a chemical reaction, it becomes carbonic acid. That in turn makes it more difficult for calcium-based creatures, such as shellfish, to build or maintain their shells. On the West Coast, shellfish aquaculturists have seen millions of larval shellfish die in hatcheries during the past decade due to acidic ocean water. Since then the growers have learned to tune their facilities to the varying degrees of acidity in the ocean in order to prevent losses. “Hatcheries are a useful tool. You can control the depth of water brought into the hatchery and the timing. In addition, we can selectively breed for acid-tolerant strains,” Mook explained.

Jonathan Labaree of the Gulf of Maine Institute in Portland spoke about the changes that are happening in the Gulf of Maine due to increased water temperature. During the past nine years the average rise in sea surface temperature in the Gulf of Maine has taken a sharp turn upward, increasing by 0.23°C per year rather than the previous average of 0.03°C. “[Mid-Atlantic] marine species are moving in, things like black sea bass, sea horses and long-fin squid,” he said. In addition, certain annual activities, such as the lobster molt, are occurring at different times. “Management can’t rely on history for managing [fish species],” Labaree argued. “Looking back won’t inform how we look forward.”
In Casco Bay, lobstermen are now finding red hake, turf, even Chesapeake Bay blue crabs in their traps. Train wondered what will happen as species for which there is a quota south of Maine move north and east into waters for which no quota exists. Dewey Hemilright, a fisherman from Wanchese, North Carolina, said that the same shift was occurring in his region, as southern species, including the invasive lionfish, move northward. Hemilright, who sits on the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council, noted drily that making management changes for any fishery is not something that occurs quickly. Fishermen also don’t change their fishing patterns easily. “We can’t adapt that quickly to match the migratory patterns of the fish,” Hemilright said. “Still, everyone says they will adapt so they can still make a living on the water.”

On Friday afternoon, a panel of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officials faced a packed room for an informal question and answer session. In late February, NOAA announced that $75 million in relief funds would be given to six areas of the country that suffered “fisheries disasters” in 2013. The New England states will receive $32,847,000 to offset the sharply reduced total allowable catch for key groundfish species during that fishing year.

Eileen Sobreck, newly appointed assistant administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Samuel Rausch, deputy assistant administrator, Bill Karp, head of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and John Bullard, Northeast regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries, answered a variety of questions related to the intricate bureaucratic dance that controls fishermen. One question on the minds of many groundfishermen was how the $33 million would be distributed and when. “We will make intelligent decisions to get it to where it does the most good. We want to make sure that these dollars are stretched,” responded Bullard. He explained that NMFS would work with the governors’ offices in the affected states to create a consensus plan on how the money would be released. He gave no schedule for that process.

Another member of the audience asked about the effects of establishing a Habitat Area of Concern in the near shore Gulf of Maine. Habitat Areas of Concern are called for by the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act and, in New England, could include areas in which juvenile cod aggregate and adult groundfish spawning grounds. A series of rolling closures have been proposed by the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) as one of several alternatives to protect these areas. “The Council will review these alternatives,” Rausch explained, referencing the “Draft Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment” document released last year. “Then there will be a series of public meetings this summer to gather comments. The Council will likely vote on this at its November meeting.”

In response to a question about who should pay for the cost of at-sea fishery observers on groundfishing vessels when that fishing sector is contracting rapidly, Karp spoke at length about funding issues facing his center. “Management is based on stock assessments,” he said. “There’s a call for more and more frequent stock assessments on which to base management plans. There are more and more questions to answer and more and more demands. But there are no additional resources.” Currently, the federal government pays for at-sea observers who gather data on New England species landed on a given vessel. “Even if eventually the industry covers part of that cost,” Karp continued, “the Science Center has to pay to process the data.”

The cost of management was not on the mind of the audience attending a seminar on how to survive in the Atlantic Ocean late Saturday afternoon. Fishing was the second-most dangerous occupation in the United States in 2012, behind logging. Many just take the possibility of dying as an accepted part of their work. But as Dr. Ken Mirman of Machiasport pointed out, “Death at sea is not the inevitable fate of fishing.” Mirman, a member of the National Water Safety Congress and the National Center for Cold Water Safety, talked about the physiology of the human body and straightforward methods, such as wearing a modern personal flotation device (PFD), that fishermen can take to ensure that falling into the Gulf of Maine does not mean death. “You have to change your thinking,” he said. That injunction, at all levels, was at the heart of the 39th Maine Fishermen’s Forum.

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MAINE ELVER SEASON DELAYED UNTIL APRIL

Originally scheduled to begin on March 22, the 2014 elver fishing season begins Sunday, April 6, at noon. The opening was delayed due to disagreements over two bills affecting the fishery, both signed into law in mid-March. The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) needed additional time to enact the rules that will allocate individual fishing quotas to harvester which, with information identifying information for each harvester, will be uploaded to a secure database and monitored by DMR staff with information about the weight of elvers harvested and price paid, will be used to distribute new elver transaction cards.

One bill passed in March created the elver transaction “swipe” card system, used for the first time this season. Similar to a credit card, it has a magnetic stripe on the back that is encoded by DMR staff with information for each harvester which, with information about the weight of elvers harvested and price paid, will be uploaded to a secure database and monitored by the Department to ensure the state does not exceed its quota of 11,749 pounds.

Of the 11,749 lbs, DMR Commissioner Patrick Keliher is authorized to withhold up to 10% to provide a buffer that helps prevent the state from exceeding the overall quota. The Commissioner will withhold 5% from both non-tribal and tribal allocations, which leaves a total quota for the state of 11,161 pounds. The season will end May 31, 2014 or prior to that date if the state’s overall quota is reached.

CANADA-SOUTH KOREA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IN THE WORKS

Canadian fishermen and farmers say they’re thrilled that more of their Canadian lobster, pork and potatoes will be available to consumers in South Korea after years of being at a competitive pricing disadvantage. The proposed Canada-Korea free trade pact announced in March would result in significant benefits to Canadian exporters through elimination of South Korean tariff on a wide range of agricultural products. Nearly 87 percent of agricultural tariffs will be lifted on items such as maple syrup, canola oil and lobster, either immediately or over a span of up to 15 years once the agreement is put in force.

Lobster is Canada’s top seafood export to South Korea, representing nearly half of the $50 million worth of products sold in the country annually. “In the long run, it should mean better prices for the fishermen and better margins for the shippers,” said Geoff Irvine, executive director of the Lobster Council of Canada.

NOVA SCOTIA ALLOWS OFFSHORE OIL EXPLORATION

Nova Scotia has granted Canadian subsidiaries of Shell Oil Co. and BP Plc. rights to explore thousands of square miles of ocean floor in search of commercially viable oil deposits. Each company has committed to about $1 billion Canadian in survey costs over the next several years. The exploration zone extends east from an area about 100 miles south-east of Nova Scotia. Drilling ultimately could occur within 50 miles of Georges Bank, a productive fishing ground that’s shared by fishermen from Nova Scotia and New England. Shell has completed a seismic study and plans to begin drilling as many as seven exploratory wells next year. This spring, BP will begin a two-year seismic survey of a 5,000-square-mile area off the coast of Nova Scotia.

CANADIAN LOBSTERMEN PURSUE MSC CERTIFICATION

The Bay of Fundy, Scotian Shelf and Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence lobster trap fishery has entered into independent, third-party assessment for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. The client for the assessment, the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick Lobster Eco-Certification Society, is a newly formed group of stakeholders representing lobster harvesting, shipping, processing and buying interests in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, Scotian Shelf and Bay of Fundy regions. The assessment is being funded with support from society members and the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia governments. “The Canadian lobster fishery is already a wonderful example of resource sustainability,” said Eugene O’Leary, president of the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick Lobster Eco-Certification Society and president of the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen’s Association. “Working to attain MSC certification will help secure the long-term success and stability of the Canadian lobster industry in a competitive global marketplace.”

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Events Calendar

April 1
Maine Water and Sustainability Conference, Augusta Civic Center.
DMR Lobster community meeting, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., The Neighborhood House, Northeast Harbor.

April 3
Maine Sea Grant Annual Research Symposium, 1-5 p.m., University of Maine. FMI: 581-1435.

April 7
DMR Lobster community meeting, 10 a.m.-noon, York Village Fire Department, York.

DMR Lobster community Meeting 3-5 p.m., Scarborough High School Cafeteria.

April 8
MLMC Board meeting, 1-4 p.m., Rockland Ferry Terminal, Rockland. FMI: 541-9310.

April 9
MLCA Directors meeting, 11 a.m., Darby’s restaurant, Belfast. FMI: 967-6221.
MLA Directors meeting, noon, Darby’s restaurant, Belfast. FMI: 967-4555.

April 10
A History of Trade in an Ever-Changing Port, 7-8 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland. FMI: 228-1622.

April 15
ASMF Herring Days Out Meeting 1-5 p.m., Byre, NH.

April 18
Environmental Risk Advisory Committee meeting, 1-4 p.m., room 319 Deering, Augusta.

April 22-24
New England Fisheries Management Council meeting, Mystic, CT.

April 25-27
Boothbay Fishermen’s Festival

UPCOMING
May 3
42nd Annual Maritime History Symposium, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath. FMI: 443-1316.

May 6-8
Seaford Expo Global, Brussels, Belgium.

May 10
57th Annual Maritime History Symposium, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath. FMI: 443-1316.

May 13
MLMC Board meeting, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Rockland Ferry Terminal, Rockland. FMI: 541-9310.

May 17
Benton Alewife Festival, all day. FMI: 453-7191.

May 24-26
Damariscotta Mills Fish Ladder Restoration Festival, throughout each day. FMI: deb.wilson@roadrunner.com.

NOAA TWIN HULL SHIP TO UPDATE COASTAL CHARTS THIS SUMMER

by Sarah Paquette

The Commanding Officer of the NOAA Ship Ferdinand R. Hassler, LCDR Marc S. Mosier, invited members of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) to tour the vessel to provide lobstermen with an understanding of the work that the Hassler does. LCDR Mosier discussed the ship’s planned operations for the upcoming year and asked for feedback and strategies to deal with fishing gear interactions and improving communications with the lobster industry. He hopes to keep the lobster industry informed of its operations and minimize the type of conflicts which have happened in previous years.

According to NOAA’s Web site, the Ferdinand R. Hassler is a coastal mapping vessel utilizing the Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull (SWATH) design for improved stability and seakeeping. This vessel is the newest addition to NOAA’s hydrographic charting fleet and is home ported in New Castle, New Hampshire. The ship’s primary mission is conducting hydrographic surveys in support of NOAA’s nautical charting mission. The Hassler will be surveying southern Maine this summer.

On a windy day in mid-March, LCDR Mosier showed lobstermen from York and MLA staff the equipment aboard the Hassler, including high-resolution multibeam and sidescan sonar systems which generate three-dimensional bathymetric models and images of the sea floor. He explained the process the Hassler’s crew uses during surveys. LCDR Mosier also showed his guests charts of coastal areas in New Hampshire and southern Maine marked for survey in July and August and asked for input on how best to communicate the ship’s planned activities to area lobstermen. The 124-foot vessel plans to map the ocean floor along the coast from York into Wells this summer, but the Commanding Officer knows there may be some restrictions due to dense lobster gear.

“If we know we won’t be able to get the ship through gear without catching it, we won’t even try,” LCDR Mosier said. “We want lobstermen to know when we will be in the area so we can try to reduce gear conflict.” MLA executive director Patrice McCarron said the MLA would be happy to work with the Ferdinand R. Hassler crew to get word out to lobstermen about the vessel’s whereabouts to minimize gear conflict and reduce the chances of lost and damaged gear.

For more information visit www.moc.noaa.gov/fh/; ship’s email: Noaa.Ship.Ferdinand.Hassler@noaa.gov; ship’s phone: 603-631-4500.
Jeff Todd Titon, now a professor of ethnomusicology at Brown University, recorded a story told by Albert “Hap” Collins of Blue Hill for the Maine Folklife Center at the University of Maine in Orono in 1988. Collins worked most of his adult life lobstering. He operated a sawmill in the summer and supplemented his income with masonry, blacksmithing, scalloping, logging, or a variety of other jobs in the winter. He was also a renowned fiddler and a poet. He built skiffs for neighbors and tourists, and near the end of his life he created small boats modeled after various sea craft on which he had worked. This story is about his grandfather, who worked as a mail carrier, delivering mail from the mainland to Long Island in Blue Hill Bay during the late 1800s. In the early 20th century, the entire population of Long Island moved to the mainland.

Collins: Well, my father, he come from Long Island and they had a thousand sheep, he and the old man together over there. They were Scots, they come from Scotland anyway, from sheep country. My grandfather was a Scotchman. And he had come from Scotland to Digby, Nova Scotia. And then he come from Digby, Nova Scotia down here, and he settled on Long Island.

He died in 1926, I think, or something like that. But when he lived on the island he farmed and he fished, and he carried the mail for about thirty years, back to the mainland. Well, he got a dollar a day. You think of it.

One of the postal inspectors was down here [in Blue Hill] one time, ’twas late in the fall. [He came to visit] the postmaster down here, that was Ben Sylvester. He had the store, and he had the post office, too.

He said, “Mr. Henderson [Collins’ grandfather] gets too much money.” He says, “That’s the island right over there. All he’s got to do is carry the mail across there.”

Well, anyway, Ben Sylvester said, “Well, now, he’ll be coming off with the mail pretty soon. You’ll get a chance to talk with him.”

So Grandfather come off with the mail and it was late in the Fall. So Sylvester told Grandfather what was up. Grandfather said, “Well, now,” he said. “You know, it’s going to blow nor’west this afternoon a good breeze. And I’m going to wait until it gets a damn good breeze and I’m going to take him across with me.”

So he did. It got blowing. Grandfather only had a twelve-foot skiff with a sail on her. He got the old postal inspector in the bottom of the skiff, told him to set still and not move. And of course Grandfather started out and he had that skiff so the water was right on the rail, you know, and the fellow was scared. “Oh,” he said, “Mr. Henderson,” he said, “let’s go back.” Grandfather says, “I’m carrying the United States mail. It has to be delivered. I can’t go back.”

“Well,” the postal inspector said, “I’ll make an exception. I’m the postal inspector!”

“He, Grandfather said, “Nothing to it. I do this all the time,” he said, “This is a nice day!” So finally he got him over there [to Long Island]. When he got him on the island shore, the old fellow was so scared he couldn’t get out of the skiff. Grandfather had to wait. Then he got out of the skiff and he couldn’t walk!