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Lobster Bulletin

Lobster Institute

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Fall 2013

## The Lobster Bulletin, Fall 2013

Lobster Institute, University of Maine

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Fall 2013

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

### **Published by the Lobster Institute**

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

## **Maritime Lobster Panel Releases Report**

The Ministers of Fisheries from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island jointly commissioned a panel to review and make recommendations related to fishery issues surrounding pricing, variability thresholds and marketing. The panel reviewed existing reports and conducted over fifty meetings with approximately 200 companies and individuals connected to the lobster fishery. The panel’s findings were released in a report to the Ministers on November, 2013.

According to the documents executive summary, the report includes: “ an explanation for the 2013 price drop; an analysis of the factors affecting lobster prices; the challenges in determining thresholds; the ability of the ability of various industry sectors to negatively impact wharf price; advice on marketing Canadian lobster; options for a formal system for establishing prices pre-season; and finally and most importantly, advice to stabilize and then increase the price paid to fishermen while taking into consideration the other players in the industry.”

The panel also indicated their interviews revealed, “An industry that has been struggling instead of cooperating, fishing for quantity instead of value, fighting over pennies and losing dollars, and asking others to solve their problems.”

The report lists 33 recommendations related to industry structure, relationships and operations. While acknowledging that many of the recommendations are not new, they do indicate that action has yet to be taken on many and “there remains much to do.” They do, however, propose what they term a “Value Recovery Strategy”, highlighted by three substantial initiatives to bring about changes to the industry’s structure: creating an Independent Maritime Lobster Market Intelligence Institute, develop and implement a Comprehensive Generic Marketing and Promotion Campaign for Canadian lobster; and establishing a price-setting mechanism for determining price pre-season – based on

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## **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Mandated Fall Closure in Long Island Sound**

The extreme die-off in the lobster stocks in Long Island Sound in 1999 is a matter of public record. After several attempts to bolster the resource through such management efforts as gauge increases and bigger escape vents, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) opted to close the entire lobster fishery in the Sound from September 1, 2013 to November 28, 2013. The intent of this new tactic is to reduce the landings in the Sound by 10 percent. Before the breakdown of the fishery fourteen years ago, landings were at an annual record high of 1.8 million pounds in the western basin; now landings are less than 15,000 pounds.

According to an article by John Nickerson in the September 11, 2013 Norwalk Citizen, Connecticut’s Marine Fisheries Director David Simpson indicated the closure is also an attempt to bolster the reproductive capacity of the lobster stocks. Simpson contends the low population is due to rising water temperatures which are causing an increase in stressed and diseases lobsters, leading to mortality. While most lobstermen believe

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## Long Island Sound Closure

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water quality, including pesticides, play a major role in the current level of the stock, Simpson does not. "They [lobsters] are not going to be able to persist here very well at these temperatures. This is largely what they are facing," Simpson said. "There are some lobstermen concerned about pesticides, but I don't share that view."

However, at the University of Connecticut researchers are still studying what effects pesticides may be having on the lobster population in the Sound. Additionally, this summer the Connecticut legislature passed a bill, signed by Governor Dannel Malloy, banning the use of methoprene and resmethrin – two pesticides dropped in storm drains to help control mosquitoes – which lobstermen believe are killing their catch. Nickerson goes on to say in his article that fishermen feel until the use of pesticides in all areas of the Sound is banned, what lobsters are being saved during the closure are only going to be killed off later due to the poor water quality.



Nick Crismale, President of Connecticut Commercial Lobstermen's Association & Lobster Institute Board member

Nickerson goes on to report that even veteran lobstermen's advocate and long-time president of the Connecticut Commercial Lobstermen's Association, Nick Crismale, has finally decided to sell both of his fishing boats and gear. He quotes Crismale as saying, "There is no confidence on the part of the industry that the people in charge know what they are doing or that they are capable of

bringing the resource back," Crismale said. "The fight has taken the wind out of my sails." ❧

(Nickerson's full article, *Commission sinks state's lobster industry*, can be read at <http://www.norwalkcitizenonline.com/default/article/Commission-sinks-state-s-lobster-industry-4805776.php>)

## Maritime Lobster Panel Report

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legislation yet not mandatory, but "once engaged by a particular fleet or group, the price negotiated becomes the minimum legal price that can be paid to that fleet or groups."

The panel suggested the above initiative be funded by an "Industry Levy" on fishermen in the form of one cent per pound of lobster landed, with an additional penny per pound paid by onshore sectors.

Some excerpts from the report are included in this Lobster Bulletin's Research Report on page 3. A copy of the full report can be viewed on line at the following: <http://www.gnb.ca/9999/publications/MartimeLobsterPanel.pdf>

## Acheson Survey on Lowering Maine Trap Limits

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"increase profits by reducing expenses for fuel and bait, reduce trap tangles, and increase catches per trap hauled."

"Those opposing a lower trap limit have a far more complicated set of reasons," writes Acheson. "Some assume profits would be increased by lower trap limits, but others assume the opposite." Others noted that there should be stricter limits on the part-timers but not on the full-time lobstermen. Still others reasoned that the harder they fished, the more they would earn. Yet another reason cited was that lower trap limits simply were not needed, that there was no overcrowding and limited entry regulations were beginning to work.

Acheson concludes that the politics surrounding attempts to lower trap limits are intricate. "In this industry, resource management policy is being made in an atmosphere in which different industry groups are pulling in different directions for complex sets of reasons." He speculates that, "If the past provides any insight, industry factions will play a key role in blocking or motivating changes in trap limits. But the factions currently emerging around the trap limit issue are complex. There are people with different views and motives, and many could be persuaded to change factional allegiance, perhaps suddenly, if conditions change." ❧

Discussion of trap limits and other possible measures aimed at providing for a consistent lobster catch will take place at the 2014 Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meeting. See page 4 for more details.



**As a Non-profit, the Lobster Institute relies on industry and private support to continue its work for and with the lobster fishery. Please consider donating as a Friend of the Lobster Institute today.**

**Call 207-581-2751 or visit [www.lobsterinstitute.org](http://www.lobsterinstitute.org)**



# RESEARCH REPORT

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

➤ **Lobster Research Fleet Pilot Project** – The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) began field data collection this summer for their “On-Deck Data Program” designed to look at new technologies for the collection and management of lobster fishing data in Southern New England management areas. The pilot project was initiated by the CFRF in response to requests from the lobster fishing industry to address the lack of data from offshore waters. Lobstermen in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire have been recruited and trained to use tools such as digital calipers and Android tablets to record and relay catch data via the internet to a central CFRF database. Data is recorded on sex, whether females are v-notched or egg-bearing, carapace length, and presence of shell disease. Additional information is collected on the longitudinal and latitudinal location of the catch, soak time of the traps, number of traps sampled, and the total number of lobsters sampled per set of traps (includes both legal and non-legal lobsters). Twelve vessels are part of the research fleet, six from Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) 2 and six from LCMA 3. Each vessel was also given three ventless traps to deploy and sample throughout the course of the project. Collection of field data is ongoing through June 2014, at which time a final report will be compiled and results disseminated. The pilot project is a collaboration among CFRF, industry leaders, state lobster management personnel from Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and staff from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and National Marine Fisheries Service. More information on the project can be found at <http://cfrfoundation.org/lobster-research-fleet/>

⌘



*Greg Mataronas of the F/V Happy Hours using digital calipers for the “On-Deck Data Program”*  
Photo Credit: Anna Malek, CFRC Program Administrator

➤ **Fractions, Models and Resource Regulations: Prospects for Lowering the Maine Lobster Trap Limit** – (*excerpts from an article by James Acheson & Ann Acheson in the 2010 Hu. Ecol 28:587-598*) There was pointed discussion of lobster trap limits at the various summer 2013 information sessions hosted by Maine Department of Marine Resource Commissioner Patrick Keliher. In light of this ongoing interest, Dr. James Acheson shared findings from his thirty years of research on this topic at a recent meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lobster Institute. Her particularly focused on a survey conducted in 2009-2010 of 3,000 Maine lobster license holders (of which 701 responded) and 124 follow-up phone interviews.

When asked “What s the most important problem facing the lobster industry?” overfishing (i.e. too many traps/lobstermen) was noted by 24.5% of the respondents. This was second only to cost/price squeeze, which was noted by 35.8%. Additionally, when gauging the attitudes of fishermen about lower trap limits by asking respondents to agree or disagree with the statement, “There are too many traps in the water in my zone,” a full 63% either agreed or strongly agreed, while only 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed. However the Achesons’ findings also revealed that only 48% of respondents said they would support measures to reduce the number of traps a fisherman is allowed to fish in their zone; while 44% said they would not (8% said they did not know.) According to the article, “In short, many fishermen believe there are too many traps in the water, but far fewer want their zone council or the legislature to pass more stringent trap limits.” Additionally, Acheson notes, “many fishermen assume that attitudes towards a trap limit vary with the size of the fishermen’s operation. That is true to some extent. On the whole, those with more traps are less supportive of a lower trap limit than those with a smaller number of traps.”

Those who favor a trap limit general noted they did so because they” believe the fishery is inefficient” and that “having a lower trap limit would

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**LOBSTER INSTITUTE**

*Lobster Bulletin, Fall 2013*

**\*\*\*HOLD THE DATE\*\*\***



**CANADIAN/U.S.  
LOBSTERMEN'S TOWN MEETING**

*We are all in this together!*

*Hosted by the*



**Friday – March 21, 9:00 - 4:00  
& Saturday – March 22, 8:30 - 11:30**  
**Seafood Reception – Friday Evening 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.**  
**(Cash bar)**

**Regency Hotel -- Portland, Maine**  
**Only \$25 – including lunch & reception.**

**Likely topics to include:**

- ❖ **Aiming for a consistent catch**
- ❖ **Unified generic marketing**
- ❖ **Sustaining the resource**
- ❖ **Handling for quality & Dockside grading**
- ❖ **Plus lots of time for open discussion in a true town meeting format!**

Call the Lobster Institute at 207-581-1443 to get your name on the invitation list. More details and a registration form will be posted on the Lobster Institute's Web site in January – [www.lobsterinstitute.org](http://www.lobsterinstitute.org)

**Note to our Canadian friends: Don't forget to get your passport applications in ASAP!**

**Seabourn Cruise Lines Hosts  
Lobster College**



*Seabourn Sojourn anchored in Nova Scotia*

The Lobster Institute brought its Lobster College to the high seas aboard the Seabourn Sojourn in October, 2013 for a 7 day lobster learning experience for the ship's passengers. Dr. Bob Bayer and Cathy Billings provided lectures on lobster biology (including a dissection); the history of the lobster industry, sustainability of the resource, and the economics of the industry. Lobster College "students" also enjoyed many informal discussions on everything lobster.

The cruise sailed through some of the world's richest lobster waters: traveling from Montreal up through the St. Lawrence River to Quebec, into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and on to the Gulf of Maine. Ports of call included lobstering harbors at Magalen Islands, Gaspé, Sydney and Bar Harbor.

Over 60 of Seabourn's guest participated in Lobster College, earning their "diploma" as part of the inaugural Seabourn Lobster College Class of 2013. Classes were also video-taped and broadcasts on the ship's onboard television channel for other guests to enjoy and learn



*Lobster Boats at Gaspé, Quebec, Canada*