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Lobster Bulletin

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Spring 2007

## The Lobster Bulletin, Spring 2007

Lobster Institute, University of Maine

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Spring 2007

*“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.”**

 **2007 Canadian/U.S.**   
**LOBSTERMEN'S TOWN MEETING**

Lobstermen from both Canada and the United States gathered in St. John, New Brunswick on April 13 for the fourth Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meeting, hosted by the Lobster Institute. The Town Meeting is designed as an industry-wide gathering of lobstermen and other interested parties, coming together to discuss topics of direct concern to the fishery and the lobster industry. Over sixty people were in attendance, and the focus was on the economics and socioeconomic impacts and influences related to the lobster industry. Ashton Spinney, a lobsterman from Nova Scotia and co-chair of the planning committee for the event started the meeting by noting, “The reason we're all here today is an important one. We may come from different geographic areas, but we all share and rely on the same natural resource. Sustaining a shared resource calls for constructive sharing of information. Our knowledge grows by this sharing of observations and experiences... and the greater our knowledge the better our decision-making will be.”

Goals for the meeting included:

- Providing lobstermen with an opportunity to communicate what they see as the major economic implications related to sustaining a vital fishery and how these factors do or should fit into the management process.
- Discussing ways lobstermen and scientists can provide/enhance the data available to develop a complete picture of the overall impact of the lobster fishery on the socio-economic conditions of their communities, their states or provinces, and region-wide -- thus providing the industry and researchers with valuable information needed to make the case for adequate funding for lobster-related research and to advocate for management and legislative decisions geared toward finding the right balance between sustaining the resource and maintaining a vital fishery.

--cont. on page 2

*A continuing “did you know” series featuring historical highlights of Lobster Institute research and accomplishments.*



### Twenty Years of Service

Did you know that when the Lobster Institute was formed in 1987 it was part of what was then the Maine/New Hampshire Sea Grant College Program based at the University of Maine? Dr. David Dow, then with the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, was the Institute's executive director for its first eight years. When the Institute was formed, he stated it “could be the greatest thing to happen to the lobster industry in 100 years, in terms of enhancement and conservation.”

The Winter 2007 issue of the *Lobster Bulletin* highlighted some research accomplishments and milestones of the Institute's first five years. The celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lobster Institute continues in this edition, with highlights of the second five years (1992-1996). See the “Research Report” on page 3 for key research, and see page 4 for a continuation of our series of milestones in Lobster Institute history during this period. ❄

The Lobster Bulletin  
published by the



**LOBSTER INSTITUTE**

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

*A unit of the Maine Agricultural & Forest Experiment Station*



*A member of the University of Maine System*

Cathy Billings, Editor [cathy.billings@umit.maine.edu](mailto:cathy.billings@umit.maine.edu)

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**2007 Canadian/U.S.  
LOBSTERMEN'S TOWN MEETING**



--cont. from page 1

- Fostering collaboration and communication between all geographic areas of the fishery, reinforcing the fact that all share and rely on a common resource that must be protected.
- Promoting dialogue between lobstermen, scientists and fisheries management personnel.

The event began with a panel discussion featuring reports from three researchers that helped set the stage for the discussions that followed. John Driscoll, a Masters candidate at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who is working on a Life Cycle Assessment of the Maine lobster fishery described an upcoming survey designed to provide information on the carbon energy outputs generated by the various sectors of the lobster industry. Michael Gardner, President of Gardner Pinfold Consulting Economists, also from Halifax, commented on a study his firm recently conducted for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, entitled "Benchmarking Study on Canadian Lobster". Finally, Laura Singer, the Director of Collaborative Research at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute summarized findings from their "Lobster Socio-economic Impact Survey".

The majority of the discussion then took place in a true town meeting format. Lobstermen were asked to share their thoughts, concern, questions, and experiences. Some of the topics discussed included:

- rising costs associated with lobster fishing such as bait, fuel, etc.
- influences on the pricing structure through all channels of the industry from fisherman to the final consumer.
- marketing challenges and "branding" of the product.
- how to reconcile environmental needs with economic realities.

"A distinctive feature of our Town Meetings is the emphasis on the lobstermen's perspective," said Dr. Bob Bayer, Executive Director of the Lobster Institute. "This year we had an excellent mix of participants from the various sectors of the industry, which led to some very frank and productive discussions."

Darden Restaurants has provided sponsorship for the Lobster Institute's Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meeting since its introduction in 2004. Fisheries Products International provided sponsorship of the welcome reception held the night before the event.

As always, the Town Meeting session was recorded, and the Lobster Institute will make a CD or written reports available to interested parties. In addition, a summary report and full transcript will be made available on the Lobster Institute's Web site at

www.lobsterinstitute.org as soon as they are compiled. Call Jean Day at 207-581-1443 or email jean.day@umit.maine.edu for information. ☞

**Lobsters Prices Elevated as Water Temperatures Remained Low**

Consumers have been surprised to find the price of live lobsters topping \$15 in their local grocery stores this spring, about double what they cost this time last year. They fared no better in restaurants, some of which were asking \$30 for a 1-½ pound lobster dinner. Cooked and picked lobster meat could be found at \$60 per pound in some cases.

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association's "North Atlantic Lobster Coalition Market Demand & Supply Update" (April 23, 2007) indicates that while the quality of lobsters has been excellent, the supply is simply inadequate.

Three factors are thought to be major contributors to the short supply and consequently the higher than usual prices: colder than normal water temperatures for the time of year, rough weather conditions, and few lobsters available from holding facilities and pounds.

According to Dr. Bob Bayer, executive director of the Lobster Institute, "A series of storms and strong northwest winds made it difficult for lobstermen to head out to sea in March and April. When they did head out, they found bait still in their traps and few or no lobsters. An unusually cold spring lowered water temperatures about six degrees, and lobsters are less active and less likely to feed when the water temperature is cold."

In addition to the poor weather and cold waters, few lobsters were being held in reserve by tidal pound owners and lobster storage facilities (primarily found in Canada) this spring due to surpluses in recent years. The combined result was the higher than normal prices found all along the market chain from the dock to the dining table. However, Bayer feels the current short supply of lobsters being trapped does not reflect a decrease in the lobster stocks. He noted the prices should start to fall once the weather starts to cooperate and water temperatures rise. ☞



**Check out the Lobster Institute website at  
[www.lobsterinstitute.org](http://www.lobsterinstitute.org),  
providing the definitive site for lobster  
information ..... with nearly 200 links.**





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

# RESEARCH REPORT

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

❖ **Tidal Lobster Pounds to be Tested as Lobster Rearing Facilities** – The Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research & Education, in collaboration with the Lobster Institute, has received a grant from the Maine Community Foundation to test the use of tidal lobster pounds as facilities for rearing lobsters for stock enhancement purposes. The study calls for using dormant lobster pounds as controlled mesocosms for the hatching and raising of larval lobsters. The concept is to hatch and rear lobsters inexpensively in large quantities, taking advantage of a natural environment, including the natural feed that is available in this setting. The larval lobsters will be reared to Stage IV or V, at which time they will be released. At Stage IV or V the lobster should be sizeable enough to dwell on the ocean bottom and find adequate shelter to protect themselves. During the first stages after hatching, lobsters are most vulnerable to predators, as they are small and light, and basically float within the top meter from the water’s surface. If this concept proves successful, evaluation of post-release survival rates would be required to validate this method as an

effective stock enhancement tool. Tissue samples will be taken from egged-lobsters used in the trials to allow for possible DNA profiling in the future in order to validate settlement models. Look for a report on this project in a future issue of the *Lobster Bulletin*.

❖ **Hatchery Project Also Underway in Cornwall, England** – According to the BBC News, the National Lobster Hatchery in Cornwall has secured funding to continue its work to preserve stocks of *Hommarus gammarus* for local fishermen. There have been concerns the popularity of lobsters in restaurants could threaten the species. Local fishermen bring pregnant females to the hatchery in Padstow, which allows them to release their delicate offspring in captivity, free from predators. The juveniles are raised to a size where they can be released back into the sea. The hatchery released about 10,000 juvenile lobsters into coastal waters around the region in 2006, although it takes several years for them to reach maturity. The hatchery is also funded by its visitor center where people can see the project in action.

## Celebrating the Lobster Institute’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Research Highlights in the Second Five Years: 1992-1996



**1992**

Trials to enhance yield and shelf-life of frozen cooked lobster.



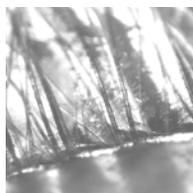
**1993**

Conducted thermal thresholds and lobster recruitment studies.



**1994**

Helped compile a history of lobster legislation.



**1995**

Devised a test to detect illegally scrubbed egg-bearing lobsters.



**1996**

Composed a HAACP logbook as a tool to ensure safe lobster storage.



**LOBSTER INSTITUTE**

*Lobster Bulletin, Spring 2007*

**The Lobster Institute Celebrates  
Its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: 1987 – 2007  
Milestones through the  
Second Five Years**

**1992**

The Lobster Institute, working through Maine Sea Grant, publishes the first edition of its “Lobster Pound Manual”. The manual covers such topics as stocking/maintaining a pound, avoiding or dealing with contaminants, handling predators, and recognizing and preventing common diseases.

**1993**

The Lobster Institute was instrumental in organizing the first International Lobster Congress. Held in Portland, Maine, the Congress featured a “Lobster Hall of Information”; an in-the-water boat show; as well as a variety of seminars on such topics as lobster health, management updates, and new product development.

**1994**

The Lobster Institute participated in a research and trade mission to Galway, Ireland. Then executive director Dr. David Dow spent three weeks leading seminars for the Irish Lobster Association (ILA) on lobster conservation/management and the need for the industry to communicate, cooperate, and work together to conserve the resource. Dow and representatives of the ILA traveled over 2500 miles, conducting 26 seminars and workshops in fishing communities throughout the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

*This is the second in a series of four articles celebrating the Institute’s twenty years of service to the lobster industry. Look for five years of highlights in each of our next two issues in 2007, as well as profiles of and quotes from key Lobster Institute leaders over the years.*

**1995**

- ❖ Dr. Robert Bayer replaces Dr. Dow as Executive Director of the Lobster Institute. Dr. Bayer, a professor with the University of Maine’s Department of Animal & Veterinary Sciences, was one of the first researchers to work with the Institute, and had served on its Board of Advisors for many years.
- ❖ A test is devised for law enforcement to determine if egg-bearing lobsters have been illegally scrubbed to remove their eggs.

**1996**

- ❖ The Institute launched its first site on the Internet.
- ❖ An endowment fund was established at the University of Maine Foundation to help secure the work of the Lobster Institute for the future.

*“The idea behind the Institute is to get more people involved in lobster problem solving, and to keep them talking to one another. We all need each other and Lord knows there’s plenty for all of us to do.”*



1987 -- Ed Blackmore, First Chairman of the Lobster Institute Board of Advisors.