Landings, vol. 23, no. 3

Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance

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by Steve Mistler  
First published by the Portland Press Herald, February 19. Reprinted with permission

Gov. Paul LePage has joined a coalition of governors supporting offshore drilling and exploration for oil and natural gas. The Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition announced Thursday that LePage had become the first governor from the Northeast to join the group. The coalition receives support from the Consumer Energy Alliance, a Houston nonprofit formed in 2006. CEA represents over 200 corporate interests, including oil companies such as Shell, Chevron and BP, and has received significant funding from the American Petroleum Institute, the American Gas Alliance and the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, according to its 2011 and 2012 tax records.

CEA opposes development of new oil and gas reserves on U.S. lands and offshore areas, arguing that increased domestic energy production would help reduce America’s reliance on imported oil. The group’s opposition includes a (false) claim that President Obama’s support for increased U.S. energy self-sufficiency is based on his desire to prop up his own political base. However, a report released today by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) shows that America’s energy self-sufficiency is improves by nearly half (48.5%) in 2014 compared to 2010. The report also shows that the U.S. now produces more energy than it imports, marking the first time since 1971.

Gov. LePage became the first governor from the Northeast to join the coalition Thursday, according to the Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition. The coalition was formed in July 2014 by then-Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin and now includes governors from nine states: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Wyoming, Alaska and LePage.

Gov. LePage was joined in the announcement by U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., who is chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Hoeven highlighted the economic potential of offshore drilling during the announcement Thursday. “This announcement today is a significant development for the energy economy and bringing jobs and prosperity to our states,” Hoeven said.

LePage has previously supported offshore drilling, and his administration has supported efforts to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling. The state also signed a cooperative agreement with the Obama administration in January 2013, providing a commitment to develop the Gulf of Maine for offshore energy exploration.

The Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition was founded by Wisconsin in July 2014. The coalition now includes governors from nine states: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Wyoming, Alaska and LePage. The coalition has been working to promote offshore energy development and increase domestic energy supply. The group opposes new oil and gas reserves on U.S. lands and offshore areas, arguing that increased domestic energy production would help reduce America’s reliance on imported oil. The coalition receives support from the Consumer Energy Alliance, a Houston nonprofit formed in 2006. CEA represents over 200 corporate interests, including oil companies such as Shell, Chevron and BP, and has received significant funding from the American Petroleum Institute, the American Gas Alliance and the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, according to its 2011 and 2012 tax records.

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2014 RECORD YEAR FOR VALUE OF LOBSTER LANDINGS

DMR press release

For the third year in a row and only the third time ever, Maine lobster fishermen landed over 120 million pounds, with a record overall value of $456,935,346, according to preliminary landings data reported by the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR). At $3.69 per pound, the landed value represented an improvement of 79 cents per pound over 2013, the largest one-year increase in per pound value since DMR and the National Marine Fisheries Service began keeping records. The one-year jump in overall value ($86,653,573) was more than the total value of the lobster fishery 21 years earlier.

“The Maine lobster industry’s long-standing commitment to responsible harvesting practices continues to sustain not only this fishery but also Maine’s coastal economy,” said Governor Paul R. LePage.

DMR is reporting bonuses again this year; although that figure only includes just over half of Maine’s lobster co-operatives, the total is more

NEW DIRECTOR AT DMR BUREAU OF MARINE SCIENCE

By Melissa Waterman

In February, Carl Wilson, 41, became the new director of the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Bureau of Marine Science. The Bureau comprises the Biological Monitoring and Assessment, Sea-Run Fisheries and Habitat, and Marine Education divisions. Wilson has been the department’s lead lobster biologist for the past fifteen years.

Many years before that he had been a sunburned kid whiling away the long days exploring Isle au Haut from his family’s summer house. Back in the late 1970s Carl’s father, University of Maine economist Jim Wilson, was meeting with island lobstermen to learn more about the social and economic elements of Maine’s lobster fishery. “My dad was working with Lawson Bridges [of Head Harbor]. He was on the island one day having lunch with Lawson and asked him if there were any houses for sale. As it turned

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We’re looking for 2015 Maine lobster and crab supply.  
See back page.

LindaBeansMaineLobster.com

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A “MAINE LOBSTER” FROM AWAY.

March is the time of year when Mainers begin thinking of thoughts of spring. This winter has been a hard one, with a steady parade of snowstorms and frigid temperatures. This month signals the moment when the air begins to warm, the ground to thaw, and we turn our sights to the promise of a new fishing season.

In Landings this month we turn our sights to the new Department of Marine Resources Bureau of Marine Science director Carl Wilson. Wilson served as the department’s lobster biologist for 15 years. During this time he started or expanded several research programs focused on the lobster’s lifecycle, programs that have significantly changed our understanding of Maine’s lobster populations. He took up his new position in February.

Landings also features an update on lobster science from DMR sea sampling coordinator Kathleen Reardon. Drawing on several different surveys, Reardon’s data shows that lobster stocks are still thriving and the juvenile population remains robust.

We also continue catching up with participants in last year’s Lobster Leadership Institute. Twelve young men and women took part in the Institute, which included a trip to visit lobstermen on Prince Edward Island. This month we talk with Dustin Delano, who made major changes in his life and became more involved in the industry after participating in the Institute.

Science plays such a large role in the fishing world, a role that many might not realize. In this month’s Landings, we feature an article on a new type of computer model developed by scientists at NOAA’s Northeast Science Center and used to predict climate change. The new “high-res” model provides a much more precise assessment of the impact that global climate change will have on the Gulf of Maine than was available previously. The prediction suggests that the Gulf will become much warmer toward the end of this century than earlier forecasts predicted.

Creatures other than human beings can suffer “the bends” when brought to the surface from ocean depths too quickly. Cold and crush, which occasionally find their way into lobster traps, suffer the effects from decompression and may die if not properly returned to the ocean bottom and released. A team of University of Maine researchers is working with lobstermen to find ways to keep these fish from dying in order to protect the stocks.

One fish stock that received a favorable review recently is menhaden. After making a sharp cut in 2012 in the quota for menhaden, a migratory fish valued as lobster bait, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission reassessed the model used to estimate the health of the stock. The revised assessment, released in December 2014, indicated that menhaden are doing quite well and are not overfished. This is great news for lobstermen throughout New England.

We also hear this month from Lobster Council of Canada executive director Geoff Irvine. Lobster landings remain high in the Maritime Provinces. Several regions have achieved Marine Stewardship Council certification for their lobster fishery and others are expected to be certified soon. In addition, Canada is making strides toward developing a national branding campaign for its lobster as well as setting up a funding strategy to pay for that campaign.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association provides updates on a variety of issues, and provides a one stop summary of the federal whale regulations. And finally, MLA provides information on how to prepare for your tax filing given the changes brought about under the Affordable Care Act.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Please feel free to contact us with your ideas for new stories or send us your letters to share your thoughts on our articles and columns. Think spring!

Patrice
2015 is shaping up to be a break-through year for the lobster sector in Canada – can we seize the moment?

After many years of study, planning and organization, the current discussion on how to collect levies and fees from the lobster sector in Canada shows that the industry is poised for a new age of cooperation, collaboration and advancement.

The challenge now is to stay the course, find a practical way to make it happen, focus on branding Canada and finally fund a professional and pro-active industry group that works for all in the Canadian lobster sector.

We constantly remind ourselves that everything in the industry is connected to everything else, making provincial and sectoral boundaries meaningless. Our friends in Maine have come together to invest in marketing and promotion already. Can we in Canada put a national program ahead of individual and regional interests?

Since the beginning of the Lobster Council of Canada (LCC) in 2010, a dedicated group of lobster sector leaders (harvesters, dealers, processors and live shippers) have worked tirelessly to build a foundation of governance and process that would allow for a united and organized response to the issues of the day. With such a diverse and fragmented stakeholder base (Maine, at least, is only one state!), this task has not been easy. Compromises have been necessary; priorities have taken time to finalize and as usual in a federal system like we have in Canada, politics and the political cycle sometimes get in the way of consistent progress. In general most of the industry wants to invest in itself and wants to focus on market access, marketability and marketing and promotion. Yet a leap of faith is needed; the time to make that leap is now.

While we often talk about all the challenges in the lobster sector, it is important also to review all the progress that has been made in the last 12 months. The Canadian lobster industry has a new brand with a consistent message focused on sustainability, food safety, the pristine environment where we harvest and pack lobster, the people who make this their life’s work and the wide variety of high quality products that we offer the world. By April we hope to have achieved MSC certification for all Lobster Fishing Areas in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (joining Prince Edward Island, the Magdalen Islands and the offshore fishery) which will add another dimension to our brand story.

The LCC has recently completed projects focused on quality grading (from the boat to the first buyer), automation (to help deal with our chronic labour shortage) and traceability (to adhere to global demands). We also have just completed a framework for a marketing strategy that provides the industry with answers to longstanding marketing and promotion questions: In what countries should we focus our efforts? Should we engage with the trade or directly with consumers and, if so, is retail more important than foodservice? What about cruise lines, casinos? The ‘buy local’ movement? What tactics should we employ? We now have a strategy that is ready to go as soon as we find a way to put our pennies on the table to make it happen.

Which brings us to the winter of 2015. Each sector within each province is working through or has finished a process to determine support for an industry levy (or fee) collected from harvesters and buyers to invest in marketing, promotion, research and the priorities of the LCC and the lobster sector. It appears that a different mechanism will be in place in each province based on their individual realities.

The harvesters on Prince Edward Island are using the Natural Products Marketing Act provisions to start a marketing board to allow for levy collection from themselves. The buyers can take advantage of an amendment to the Fisheries Act that will be affirmed in the spring sitting of the legislature to collect from themselves. In New Brunswick the provincial government is looking at a new piece of legislation that would allow any sector to collect from themselves if they desire. Newfoundland would likely collect from the harvesters through their union system; the buyers remain to be consulted on the matter. In Nova Scotia, there is strong sup-

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DMR UPDATE ON LOBSTER SCIENCE

By Melissa Waterman

For several years now the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has presented a summary of its lobster science data to Maine lobstermen during the winter months. DMR follows the lobster through different stages of its life through various sampling programs including the settlement index, ventless trap surveys and sea sampling program. In February, Kathleen Reardon, Lobster Sea Sampling and Ventless Survey Coordinator for DMR, provided a summary of data through 2014 to the seven lobster zone councils.

Reardon picked up where DMR left off last year when the conclusions drawn from the data through 2013 provided an unsettling outlook for the industry with an increase in the incidence of shell disease; a decrease in the V-notching rate; the lobster settlement index showed decreasing densities of young-of-the-year lobsters; and juvenile lobster numbers were up, particularly in eastern Maine.

Cod Bycatch

In 2014 DMR had to tackle a controversial topic due to the New England Fisheries Management Council’s sharp reduction in October in the cod fish quota: how many codfish are caught in lobster traps? The figure trumpeted in newspaper reports was one with which the DMR disagreed. “That estimate was in 2008, and sea sampling results, DMR was able to better characterize what happens to bycatch brought in the water. In order to gather more data on the question of bycatch mortality, Reardon explained. Based on trip level reporting of landings, which has been required of lobster dealers since 2008, and sea sampling results, DMR was able to better characterize when and where cod bycatch occurs in the lobster fishery, she continued. “The new estimate for bycatch in the inshore lobster fishery is significantly lower than the earlier estimate,” Reardon said. “We have been able to use data that we have to show that bycatch is a rare occurrence,” DMR’s data indicate that lobster traps set in the summer rarely have many cod in them when hauled. In the spring, when cod may be spawning, most lobster traps are still out of the water. In order to gather more data on the question of bycatch mortality, however, DMR plans to begin characterizing what happens to bycatch brought up in lobster traps beginning this summer as part of its sea sampling program.

Shell Disease

Lobster shell disease, which afflicts up to 30% of lobsters in southern New England, dropped slightly in 2014, affecting less than 1% of Maine lobster. “Spatially the western lobster zones were seeing more shell disease in the last few years, around 2% in 2013. But both [zones F and G] were under 2% in 2014,” Reardon reported. Zone E remained about the same (slightly below 1.5%). In the eastern lobster zones, shell disease remained under 0.5%. These data were based on lobsters examined in the sea sampling program.

V-notching

The decline in V-notched egg-bearing lobsters, however, has not reversed. Where 76% of the egg-bearing female lobsters sampled in 2000 were V-notched, just 63% were V-notched in 2014. “As landings have increased in the past few years, the percent of V-notched egg-bearing lobsters has decreased,” Reardon said. “But if you look at landings and sea sampling data before 2008 back to 1985, when landings increased three-fold [from 20 to 64 million pounds] the percent of V-notched lobsters stayed about the same, between 70 and 80%. So something has changed more recently.” While the percentages of v-notched egg-bearing females have a downward trend, the catch rates of V-notched females in traps have unquestionably increased as the lobster population has expanded. Protecting egg-bearing females, Reardon pointed out, is important not only as a conservation measure but as a component of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s ongoing stock assessment of Gulf of Maine lobster. Although V-notching females is mandatory in Maine, uniform enforcement of the regulation is nearly impossible along Maine’s extensive coast. “Whether you V-notch or not is one of those things that is based on your own ethics,” Reardon said. “This could be signaling a change of attitude in the industry.”

Lobster Settlement Index

The regional lobster settlement index, begun in 1989 by University of Maine biologist Rick Wahle, quantifies the number of newly settled lobsters on the bottom. The density of young-of-the-year suggests what lobster landings might be in seven years, when many of those new-born lobsters reach legal size. Data

Continued on page 10
NEW LEADERS IN MAINE’S LOBSTER FISHERY: Dustin Delano, Monhegan

In this series we profile some of the young men and women who took part in the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance’s inaugural Lobster Leadership Institute in May, 2014.

By Melissa Waterman

Lobsterman Dustin Delano, 24, wanted to learn about the Canadian way of fishing. “I was looking into how to fish fewer traps, spend less time on the water and increase my profits,” he said, recalling his interest in the Lobster Leadership Institute, which included a trip to Prince Edward Island (PEI). “Before I went up there, I was big into the idea that more traps are better.”

What he saw on the island prompted major changes in Delano’s life. In August, 2014, he moved from his home in Friendship out to Monhegan Island, population 69, where he is renting a house and lobstering throughout the winter months. “They only have 300 traps on PEI. I realized I didn’t need 800 traps but I couldn’t do that [reduce traps] in Friendship,” Delano explained.

He and six other lobstermen fish in the Monhegan Lobster Conservation Zone, 30 square miles surrounding the island, from October 1 to early summer and are limited to 400 traps each. The season thus far has been good. “The increase in price has been a huge help,” Delano said. “It will be interesting to see what spring brings.”

Living on an island brings with it many changes in one’s way of life. Delano appears to be handling those changes well. He knows that when the season ends and summer comes around, he will have to put his hand to a different line of work. So he is studying to get his captain’s license in order to begin a charter boat business this year. At first he was considering taking passengers out to haul lobsters with him but, given the strictures of the Monhegan Lobster Conservation Zone and the feelings of his fellow lobstermen on the island, Delano changed his plans. “I want to run it as a sightseeing and fishing charter business,” he said.

In addition, Delano is studying to become a pastor. After some time at the University of Maine and Grove City College, a Christian college in Pennsylvania, Delano enrolled in an online ministry program through Antioch College of Church Planting and Leadership in Iowa. “It’s a non-denominational Christian school. I’m hoping to start a youth ministry on the island this summer with some guys I went to Grove City.

Maine Maritime Museum wants to include YOU in the largest lobstering exhibit in the state, opening this summer.

Share your story by sending us a new or freshly painted buoy and a photo of yourself, as well as details about who you are, where you fish, how long you’ve been in the industry and how your boat got its name. We also welcome photos and videos of you at work!

Buoys can be left with your MLA representative or dropped off at the museum: 243 Washington St. in Bath. Photos and videos can be easily uploaded at www.dropitto.me/mainemaritime using the password “lobster”.

Questions? Contact Curator of Exhibits Chris Hall at 207-443-1316 or hall@maritimeme.org.

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Maine Lobstermen’s Association

Advocating for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it since 1954.

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Board of Directors’ Meeting Schedule
All meetings take place at DaVitt’s Restaurant, Belfast.
MLA Annual Meeting will be on March 6, 9 a.m., at the Samoset Resort, Rockport.

April 1, noon.

MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

STEAMING AHEAD

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association is holding its 61st Annual Meeting this month. For 61 years, the MLA has worked diligently to fulfill our mission to advocate for a sustainable resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it.

I’ve been with the MLA for 15 years. I was warned by many when I started that just as soon as you think you’ve figured something out, it will change! I’ve come to understand that the challenge of the unknown, coupled with a belief that hard work will get you through just about anything, is the draw for so many who work in this industry. As it turns out, it’s not all that different within the MLA as well.

The MLA has earned and maintained the support of so many lobstermen over its 61 years – truly an amazing accomplishment. The MLA has maintained a steady presence while other industry organizations have come and gone. We’re not miracle workers, but we’ve been careful to invest our members’ dues where they matter – keeping lobstermen informed and fighting to keep this fishery strong, regardless of which issue is coming at us. Thank you to all who continue to support us – there would be no MLA without you!

The lobster industry has faced some big ups and downs in recent years, but thankfully 2014 has left us in a good place. Though official lobster landings have not been announced as I write this, I know that last year’s landings were strong and value is up. We can all be thankful for that.

Yet despite the stability of the 2014 lobster season, the fisheries policy and management world has thrown more than a few curve balls at us. As I look back over the issues we’ve tackled on behalf of our members in recent months, I am surprised by the sheer volume of what we’ve been involved with.

At the federal level alone, the MLA has dealt with an unprecedented number of issues. We crossed paths with the EPA and Congress over a regulation that would require small vessels to have Clean Water Act permits for vessel discharge. Fortunately, at the eleventh hour, Congress once again extended our exemption to this permitting requirement. Let’s hope that they can make it permanent.

Then there was the heated issue of how cod caught in lobster traps might be affecting Gulf of Maine cod stocks. This issue was emotional and very political. The MLA was there to weigh in on behalf of Maine’s lobster industry. We worked with the Department of Marine Resources, which had data on the issue, and let the New England Fisheries Management Council know that lobster traps are definitely not the problem when it comes to cod. The MLA has now connected with University of Maine researchers who are documenting the survival rate of cod caught as bycatch in lobster traps. We dodged a bullet and set the stage for science, rather than politics, to guide this issue in the future.

The MLA then weighed in on the Council’s Essential Fish Habitat Amendment. The Amendment describes multiple proposals to close vast areas of the Gulf of Maine to trawl gear, or to re-configure or re-configure existing closures. The MLA was able to give Maine’s lobster industry a voice in this confusing process. We said “no” to new closures, “no” to opening existing closures, and “no” to any consideration of prohibiting lobster gear from these areas now or in the future. This Amendment has been 10 years in the making. The process of hammering out the final version is not over yet, but the MLA will be there to see it through.

Then there are the whale rules. At last month’s zone council meetings I heard a lot of positive feedback regarding how Maine fared in the latest round of whale regulations. MLA was part of Maine’s contingent at the recent Take Reduction Team meeting where we were able to get buy-in to expand the island buffer areas and avoid a seasonal closure of J effrey’s Ledge and Jordans Basin. But not all the feedback toward the MLA from lobstermen has been positive. It seems there are some lobstermen who missed the nearly 50 meetings held over five years to get industry input on the development of the rules and are unclear about how the rules evolved. MLA was at all of those meetings to hear the thoughts of lobstermen throughout the coast and to ensure that feedback, whether from a member or not, was incorporated as the rules were developed. The MLA has been there every step of the way, fighting to make sure federal regulations don’t put Maine lobstermen out of business.

As the dust begins to settle on the whale rules, NMFS has settled another lawsuit from the conservation community and proposes to expand right whale critical habitat to encompass nearly the entire Gulf of Maine. MLA will oppose that and argue to keep right whale critical habitat designations only in the whales’ important feeding areas. The MLA is also monitoring closely an emerging issue that could impact lobster exports from Canada to the U.S., because of that country’s lack of regulations protecting right whales.

The list doesn’t end there. The MLA continues to track the latest Coast Guard safety regulations which require all fishing boats operating beyond the 3-mile line to complete the dockside safety exams by October and carry life rafts by early next year. The MLA has taken issue with the Coast Guard’s requirement that life rafts be repackaged annually and continues to pursue strategies to amend that requirement. We’ve also been tracking federal dredge proposals and bait issues.

And then there is health insurance. So many Maine lobstermen still go without health insurance and put off much needed medical attention. MLA staff are now trained to help lobstermen understand which health insurance options are available to them under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and to help those who choose to enroll in a plan. The ACA has been a great fit for many lobstering families, though not for all. MLA’s role has been to ensure that lobstermen can get the information they need to make an informed choice.

The federal issues have truly run the gamut. I hope that the MLA has kept you well informed each month through Landings. It’s important to remember that the MLA is the only industry organization in the state that consistently makes its voice heard on these issues. It’s a lot to keep track of, even for an organization as mature as the MLA, but we do our best to stretch our resources so we can be there on those issues that could affect your livelihood.

As I’ve said before, we cover a lot of ground. The MLA makes sure that our approach at every level is professional, honest, straightforward and transparent. We understand the complexity of the issues we are dealing with and the diversity of people who are involved in the process. We know the issues, we know the players, and we are Maine lobstermen.

With 61 years under its belt, the MLA is truly a remarkable organization. I want to thank our members and directors who have been such loyal and staunch participants in the success of our fishery, I believe in the Maine lobster industry and it is a privilege to work with you. I hope to see you March 6 at our 61st Annual Meeting!

As always, stay safe on the water.

Patrice
MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA DIRECTORS MEETING

MLA Directors met on February 4 in Belfast. University of Maine researchers Jocelyn Runnebaum and Robert Boenish updated the Directors on their research on barotrauma in cusk and cod caught as bycatch in lobster traps. Runnebaum is leading a project on cusk, funded for two years through the Saltonstall-Kennedy grant program. The Northeast Regional Marine Fisheries Service (NMF$) assumes that all fish die when discarded unless there is data to provide the actual rate of mortality. The University is investigating whether or not cusk can survive decompression, since this has been successful on the west coast with rock fish. To date, the University has recruited nine lobstermen to fill out logbooks providing data on cusk bycatch seven of whom also take the researchers on their vessel. For the logbook portion of the project, lobstermen mark locations of cusk bycatch on their plotter, the condition of the fish, and record depth and bottom type. The fish is returned to the bottom in the lobster trap. The lobstermen rehaul that trap a week later and notes whether the cusk is still present and the condition of the fish.

Logbook data indicate that most cusk come to the surface alive, but barotrauma has presented most often with bulging eyes, and in some cases stomach eversion (hanging out of mouth or gills). Researchers have noted that trap haul speed is not thought to impair the condition of the fish because cusk exchange air very slowly in their system. Preliminary results indicate that cusk survival from recompression is about 80%, however the fish generally do not leave the traps on their own.

Researchers are seeking input from lobstermen on simple ways to get the fish back to the bottom and release them. They are also looking to expand this project to investigate barotrauma in cod bycatch this spring and are seeking lobstermen to fill out logbooks and host researchers aboard their vessels.

Two UMaine students, who are also lobstermen, are working on drafting surveys for the lobster industry. One will deal with lobstermen’s observations of shell disease, the other with lobstermen’s observations of cod, both.

David Coussein updated the board on his idea to get feedback from the industry on how to maintain the price and profitability of the 2014, by landing good quality and profitably of the 2014, by landing good quality lobster within state waters and substantially lower than historical levels. Conversely, total bait landings have been metric tons during 2010-2012, with peak landings of 2012, reduction fishery landings averaged 172,600 metric tons and are substantially lower than historical levels. Additionally, total fishing mortality is estimated to be 0.27, well below both the fishing mortality threshold (2.98) and target (1.03). At its February meeting, the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved the benchmark stock assessment for management use. Atlantic menhaden is harvested by both commercial reduction and bait fisheries. From 2010 to 2012, reduction fishery landings averaged 172,600 metric tons and are substantially lower than historical levels. Conversely, total bait landings have been increasing in recent years, averaging about 52,900 metric tons during 2010-2012, with peak landings of about 63,540 metric tons in 2012. In 2013, landings for both fisheries were reduced by 20%, consistent with the requirements of Amendment 2.

GSN™ TUNA SYSTEMS�

Ocean Systems Inc. is pleased to announce the following for the April 1, 2016. The LSMC will be in Rockland, Maine and will have a booth at the Seafood Expo North America (Boston Seafood Show) and will have four companies (Sea Salt, Maine Coast, SeaView and The Lobster Company)

DRAFT ADDENDUM XXIV APPROVED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The Commission’s February American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXIV to Lobster Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The draft Addendum responds to recently finalized trap transfer regulations for the federal waters of Lobster Conservation Management Areas 2, 3, and Outer Cape Cod. While the majority of the implemented federal measures are based on ASMFC recommendations and are consistent with the management plan, there are a few measures which required further consideration. Specifically, the Draft Addendum includes options to better align state and federal measures regarding the conservation tax on trap allocations where whole fish businesses are transferred, trap allocation transfer increments, and restrictions on trap allocation transfers among permit holders who are authorized to fish both state and federal waters within a single lobster management area.

The Board also approved Maryland’s request to remove the mandatory season closure for LCMA 5 in April and May. LCMA 5 will remain closed for February and March, and will reopen in April. Further management for the areas will be considered when the benchmark stock assessment is finalized, which will be in 2015.

GOOD NEWS ON ATLANTIC MENHADEN

The 2015 Atlantic menhaden benchmark assessment indicates the resource is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Population fecundity, a measure of reproductive capacity, is estimated to be 71% higher than the target value (100 trillion eggs). Additionally, total fishing mortality is estimated to be 0.27, well below both the fishing mortality threshold (2.98) and target (1.03). At its February meeting, the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved the benchmark stock assessment for management use. Atlantic menhaden is harvested by both commercial and bait fisheries. From 2010 to 2012, reduction fishery landings averaged 172,600 metric tons and are substantially lower than historical levels. Conversely, total bait landings have been increasing in recent years, averaging about 52,900 metric tons during 2010-2012, with peak landings of about 63,540 metric tons in 2012. In 2013, landings for both fisheries were reduced by 20%, consistent with the requirements of Amendment 2.

AMSFSC SEeks INPUT ON FUTURE SHRIMP MANAGEMENT

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC) Northern Shrimp Section approved the

Continued on page 8
NOAA Fisheries has proposed to expand the designation of critical habitat for endangered North Atlantic right whales in the northeastern Atlantic Ocean, including areas that will support calving, nursing, and feeding. The rule, issued pursuant to a court-approved settlement agreement, would expand the critical habitat to roughly 29,945 square nautical miles, and include northeast feeding areas in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank region and calving grounds from southern North Carolina to northern Florida. Critical habitat identifies geographic areas containing physical and biological features essential to the conservation of a listed species. Critical habitat designations do not create preserves or refuges to the conservation of a listed species. Critical habitat designations do not create preserves or refuges or any other regulations directly affecting the public. Also, the proposed rule does not include new restrictions or management measures for commercial fishing operations.

The Endangered Species Act provides for the designation of critical habitat for endangered and threatened species. NOAA Fisheries first designated critical habitat for right whales in 1994. The western North Atlantic right whale population numbers almost 450 individual whales. Designating critical habitat means that federal agencies conducting, funding or permitting activities that may affect these areas are required to consult with NOAA to evaluate whether and how their actions would affect the habitat.

The proposed northern critical habitat areas include important physical and biological features that provide foraging areas where the whales' preferred prey, copepods, are abundant. The proposed southern habitat area includes physical features that support calving and nursing with optimal physical oceanographic features.

A critical habitat designation must be supported by a full analysis of economic, national security, and other impacts. In 2012, the President directed that any future designations of critical habitat carefully consider all public comments on relevant science and economic impact, including those that suggest methods for minimizing regulatory burdens.

NMFS released the draft Marine Mammal Stock Assessments for 2014; public comments are due April 29.

### Gulf of Maine Humpback whales

**Minimum population estimate:** 823

- PBR (potential biological removal): 2.7
- Human Caused Serious Injury and Mortality: 10.15
- Ship strikes: 1.4
- Entanglement: 8.75
- Known gear: 1 U.S. monofilament hook; 3 gillnet (2 U.S., 1 CN); 1 CN weir; 3 pot (2 U.S., 1 CN)

### 2015 LOBSTER FISHERY ENTRANTS

The DMR sent certified letters to those individuals on the waiting list who are now authorized to purchase a 2015 license. These individuals have 30 days to buy their 2015 Lobster license for the limited entry zone or the next person on the waiting list is offered the slot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Retired for each new license</th>
<th>Licenses Awarded</th>
<th>Remaining Wait List</th>
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<td>3 licenses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.5 (licenses)</td>
<td>5 licenses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>1.5 (tags)</td>
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</tbody>
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### PESTICIDE RESEARCH ALONG MAINE COAST

In 2014, the Board of Pesticides Control (BPC) convened an Environmental Risk Advisory Committee (ERAC) to "examine whether current pesticide residues have the potential to affect the lobster industry in Maine directly or via impact on other marine organisms." The ERAC was formed after a bill to ban the use of two mosquito pesticides (resmethrin and methoprene) was voted down in favor of conducting research on which pesticides might pose the greatest threat to Maine's marine resources. Additionally,
BPC staff conducted a review of all the pesticide active ingredients used in Maine to determine the top priorities in relation to lobster. The review generated a list of 725 pesticide active ingredients, further refined to those likely to be found in sediments. The priority compounds identified for analysis include pyrethrins, synthetic pyrethroids (including resmethrin), methoprene and lufenuron.

In the late summer of 2014, sediment samples from 20 sites across Maine were collected based on proximity to inlets that drain developed agricultural areas and the presence of fine grained sediments in order to cover all watersheds. Two labs analyzed the samples. One lab detected bifenthrin (a synthetic pyrethroid) at 11 of the 20 sample sites and cypermethrin (a synthetic pyrethroid) at one site. Neither methoprene or resmethrin were detected.

Additional research will be conducted in 2015. Sampling sites will include areas where lobster is likely to settle. Also in 2015, Maine DEP will conduct sampling of lobster at 40 sites around the state as part of its ongoing monitoring.

**LOBSTER BILLS IN THE LEGISLATURE**

**Marine Resources Committee**

**LD 98 An Act Amending the Trap Limit for the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area**

This bill increases the number of traps that an individual registered to obtain Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area trap tags may place or maintain in the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area from 550 to 600. Sponsors by Sen Langley.

**LR 776 An Act To Establish a Limited Lobster and Crab Commercial License**

This bill has not been printed [proposal to establish a new license with a lower trap limit]. Sponsored by Rep. Kumiega.

**LD 491 An Act To Lower from 70 to 65 the Age at Which a Person May Obtain a Lobster and Crab Fishing License for a Reduced Fee**

This bill lowers the age at which a person may obtain a lobster and crab fishing license for a reduced fee from 70 to 65 years of age (Class I 566, Class II $136, Class III $203), Sponsored by Rep. Gilway.

**LD 492 An Act To Expand Eligibility for Lobster and Crab Fishing Licenses for Veterans (Emergency)**

This bill provides that an honorably discharged veteran who began military service prior to November 1, 2015, previously held a lobster or crab fishing license that was not revoked or suspended and reported lobster or crab landings to the DMR under that license is eligible to obtain a Class I, Class II or Class III lobster and crab fishing license. They would not need to complete the Apprentice Program or go on a waiting list. Sponsored by Rep. Kumiega.

**LD 490 An Act To Extend the Legal Hours for Harvesting Lobster**

This bill extends the legal hours to harvest lobster during the summer closed period. Currently, it is unlawful to raise or haul any trap during the period ½ hour after sunset until 1/2 hour before sunrise from June 1 to October 31. This proposal would extend the legal fishing hours during September and October to begin two hours before sunrise. Sponsored by Rep. Kumiega.

**LR 1315 An Act To Improve Lobster Licensing**

This bill has not been printed [proposal to allow transfer of lobster license within families]. Sponsored by Rep. Alley.

**LR 775 An Act To Increase Entry into Lobster Fishery**

This bill has not been printed. Sponsored by Rep. Kumiega.

**LD 563 An Act Regarding the Purchase of Trap Tags in the Lobster Fishery**

This bill requires the DMR Commissioner to establish by rule a minimum landings threshold for Class I, Class II or Class III lobster license holders to be eligible to purchase the maximum number of trap tags. If the license holder does not report the required landings, the license holder is not eligible to purchase more than 300 trap tags in any subsequent license year. This bill also provides that a holder of a Class I, Class II or Class III lobster license who has not reported any lobster or crab landings during the 2 years prior to January 1, 2015 may not purchase more than 300 trap tags in the license year beginning in 2016. Sponsored by Rep. Kumiega.

**LR 493 An Act To Create the Ocean Acidification Council**

This bill establishes the Ocean Acidification Council to identify, study, prevent, remediate and mitigate the direct and indirect effects of coastal and ocean acidification on species that are commercially harvested and grown in the State's coastal and ocean environments. It provides for 16 council members, including two members of the Senate, three members of the House of Representatives, three representatives of an environmental or community group, three persons who fish commercially, including at least one aquaculturist, three scientists and the Commissioner of Marine Resources, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection and the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry or those commissioners' designees.

This bill also requires the council to submit an annual report to the Legislature and authorizes the council, if necessary, to conduct hearings and to accept funding from sources outside of state funds and contains a provision repealing the laws establishing the council December 31, 2018. Sponsored Rep. Devin.

**LR 114 An Act to Address Ocean Acidification**

This bill is not printed. Sponsored by Rep. Devin.

**LD 427 An Act To Address and Mitigate the Effects of Marine Debris**

This is a concept draft which proposes to enact measures to address and mitigate plastic pollution in the marine environment, including but not limited to microdebris pollution. For the purpose of this resolution, "microdebris" means particles of plastic approximately 5 to 10 microns in length that may be ingested by filter-feeding organisms in the marine environment. Sponsored by Rep. Devin.

**LR 1490 An Act To Allow Retired Marine Patrol Officers To Obtain up to two Marine Fisheries Licenses**

This bill is not printed. Sponsored by Sen. Burns.

**LR 1481 An Act To Amend the Alewives Restoration Program on the St. Croix River**

This bill is not printed. Sponsored by Rep. Turner.

**LD 425 An Act To Prohibit False Labelling of Marine Organisms**

This bill requires clear and conspicuous labeling of a marine organism offered for sale if the marine organism is produced using genetic engineering and is labeled with the same name as its nongenetically engineered counterpart. Failure to provide the required labeling is a civil violation. Sponsored by Rep. Chapman.

**LR 509 An Act To Make the Email Addresses of DMR License Holders Confidential [DMR bill]**

This bill is not printed.

**LR 510 An Act To Amend the Emergency Rule-making Authority of the Department of Marine Resources [DMR bill]**

This bill is not printed.

**LR 511 An Act To Improve Enforcement of Maine's Marine Resources Laws [DMR bill]**

This bill is not printed [includes a proposal for license revocation for first offense of scrubbed lobster and covert electronic surveillance with probable cause].

**LR 515 An Act To Provide for Improved Reporting of Marine Resources Landings [DMR bill]**

This bill is not printed.

**LR 516 An Act To Make Technical Changes to Maine's Marine Resources Laws [DMR bill]**

This bill is not printed.

**Waterfront Bonds**

**LD 254 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support Waterfront Development**

The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of $10,000,000, will be used to fund a grant program to invest in projects that contribute to economic activity, environmental protection and community development along the State's waterfolds. It also enacts a grant program for waterfront development, which is modeled after the Riverfront Community Development Program. Sponsored by Sen. Haskell.

**COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY UPDATES**

The U.S. Coast Guard requires all state and federally documented vessels operating outside the 3-mile line to receive a docside safety exam by October 15, 2015. Exams must be completed every five years. Additionally, all state and federally documented vessels operating outside the 3-mile line must have a survival craft "that ensures that no part of an individual is immersed in water...", effective February 16, 2016.

For questions or to schedule an exam: call Kevin Plowman at 780-3256 in western Maine or Garry Moores at 838-4440 in eastern Maine.
drawn from the index in 2013 indicated that settlement had dropped in 11 areas around the Gulf of Maine, including in Maine. “Right now settlement is at or slightly lower than the 15-year average but not as low as in 2013,” Reardon said. She noted, however, that the settlement index sampling only takes place out to 5 fathoms in depth. Because the water along the Maine coast has warmed in recent years, more habitat in deeper waters has likely become suitable for young lobsters to settle and grow. “We might not be catching the signal of settlement because we are not out in the deeper water,” Reardon said.

Ventless Trap Survey

DMR’s ventless trap sampling program, on the other hand, extends to 30 fathoms in depth. All lobsters caught in these traps are categorized, which gives a clearer picture of what is happening on the bottom. According to the data, all zones have seen an increase in lobster abundance since 2010, with the greatest leap in the eastern zones. That increase remained relatively steady in 2014, though the western region of the coast has seen a decrease in juvenile lobster since 2012, Reardon reported.

Providing a sense of what is going on among lobsters on a coast as long and as diverse as Maine’s is a challenging task. By conducting different types of scientific sampling at different stages of a lobster’s life, DMR is able to integrate data and thus provide a more comprehensive view of lobster populations. “We look at how the different surveys relate to each other to try to understand things like settlement pulses,” Reardon said. “If the positive or negative patterns seen in the settlement survey translate to numbers of juvenile numbers found in the Ventless Trap Survey, then to lobsters in the Inshore Trawl Survey and later in Sea Sampling, we have more confidence in producing possible projections in landings for the future. If those survey trends do not match up across the lobster’s different life stages, we know we must be missing something.”

MLA recognizes those who have displayed outstanding service in support of the Maine lobster industry

MLA president Dave Cousens presents the 2003 Marine Patrol Officer of the Year Award to Jim Priciotta. MLA photo.

2005 Golden V-Notch Award recipient Arnie Gamage, Dave Cousens, Marine Patrol Officer of the Year Award recipient Alan Talbot. MLA photo.

Col. Joe Fessenden, Dave Cousens, and 2008 Marine Patrol Officer of the Year Award recipient Troy Dow. MLA photo.

Dave Cousens, MLA executive director Patrice McCarron, 2009 Golden V-Notch Award recipient Ted Bear, and former MLA executive director Pat White. MLA photo.

Dave Cousens, Patrice McCarron, 2011 Golden V-Notch Award recipient Willis Spear, and MLA member Steve Train. CFN photo.

Dave Cousens, 2013 Outstanding Service Award recipient Commissioner Pat Keliher, and Patrice McCarron. CFN photo.
Universal Gear Requirements (All Maine trap/pot gear)

1. No floating line at the surface.
2. No wet storage of gear; it must be hauled every 30 days.
3. Maintaining knot-free buoy lines encouraged.

Trap/Pot Gear Fished in Maine Exempt State Waters

1. Universal Gear Requirements.
2. Lobstermen must comply with one of three options:
   • All buoys must be attached with a weak link no greater than 600 lbs.
   • All buoy lines must be made entirely of sinking line.
   • All groundlines must be made entirely of sinking line.

Trap/Pot Gear Fished in Maine Non-exempt Waters (state & federal)

1. Universal Gear Requirements.
2. Weak Links no greater than 600 lbs
   • All buoys, flotation and/or weighted devices must be attached with a weak link with a breaking strength of no greater than 600 lbs.
   • Weak link must be designed so that the bitter end of the buoy line is clean and free of knots when the link breaks and installed as close to the flotation and/or weighted device as possible.
3. Sinking Groundline
   • All groundlines must be made of sinking rope, defined as rope with a specific gravity of 1.03 or greater.
   • The attachment of buoys, toggles or other flotation devices is prohibited. Floating bridles and/or short gangions allowed.

Minimum Trawling Up Requirements

1. (Isle of Shoals): 42°55.38’ N. lat., 70°28.68’ W. Lon
2. (Casco Bay): 43°29.4’ N. lat., 70°5.85’ W. Lon
3. (Monhegan): 43°39.24’ N. lat., 69°18.6’ W. Lon
4. (Matinicus): 43°40.98’ N. lat., 68°43.84’ W. Lon
5. (Mt Desert Island): 44°3.42’ N. lat., 68°10.26’ W. Lon
6. (Machias Seal): 44°31.58’ N. lat., 67°9.72’ W. Lon

Maine Non-exempt Waters (state and federal), continued

4. Minimum Traps per Trawl
   • Vary by lobster zone and distance from shore. See chart below.
   • No single traps allowed, except in island buffer zones
   • Exception: single traps allowed 1/4 mile around the islands of Monhegan, Matinicus and Cribhaven. The PenBay islands of Metinic, Seal, Wooden Ball and Green Islands; and the Isles of Shoals will be added pending federal rulemaking.

Gear Marking Techniques

Shown are three simple methods to create 12” red marks. Top: colored twine is seized around the line and woven between the strands. Center: dry line is spray-painted. Bottom: colored electrical tape wrapped in one direction and then back over itself to form two layers. Not shown: wire tie woven between rope strands.

Questions on How to Rig Gear to Comply with Whale Rules?

NMFS Gear Specialist
John Higgins
207-677-2316 or john.higgins@noaa.gov

Maine Marine Patrol
Division 1 Office Division 2 Office
207-633-9595 207-667-3373
What you need to know about health insurance and taxes

The MLA can help!

Here’s what you need to know:

- You will receive Form 1095-A from the Marketplace with information on your health insurance for 2014.
- If your 2014 income was greater than what you estimated, you may have to pay some of your subsidy back.
- If you did not have insurance in 2014 you may qualify for a Special Enrollment Period from March 15th-April 30th.

Ready to Catch a Tax Break?

We get it — and we’ve got 17 years’ experience helping commercial lobstermen and fishermen like you with tax planning and preparation that keeps you from falling into the trap of overpaying.

NOW ACCEPTING NEW CLIENTS!

Call John Hallee at 207-622-3772 or email info@backrivergroup.com today.

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Call MLA’s Navigator April Gilmore McNutt at 207-967-4555 or email to april@mainelobstermen.org. She can help answer your questions.
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Dover, NH -- 20% off propeller repair.

Applied Refrigeration Services
Windham, ME -- $250 off new installations.

Back River Financial Group
Farmingdale, ME -- Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns.

Bessy Bait, LLC
Seabrook, NH -- $5 discount per drum on multiple drum purchases (must show current MLA card).

Coastal Hydraulics
Seabrook, NH -- 10% discount on all in 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 Victinox Cutlery.

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

Hews Company, LLC
South Portland, ME -- 10% off all hydraulic components and Cable Craft cables in 2015.

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.

Midcoast Marine Electronics
Rockland, ME -- 10% off list price on all marine electronic products

Mount Desert Oceanarium
Bar Harbor, ME -- Free admission to commercial fishermen and their families

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

North Atlantic Power Products
Exeter, NH -- 10% off marine gears, controls, accessories, and parts.

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

Richard Stanley Custom Boats
Bass Harbor, ME -- $1,000 off final price of hull with MLA membership

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

Smithwick & Mariners Insurance
Falmouth, ME -- Discounted vessel insurance plus 5% discount with proof of CG approved Drill Conductor course within the last 5 years.

SW Boatworks
Lamonie, ME -- $1000 discount for hull or top

Weathervane Seafood Inc.
Kittery, ME -- 10% off mail order purchases. Just mention you are an MLA member.

Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop
Winter Harbor, ME -- 10% off picked lobster meat.
ZONE COUNCILS DISCUSS LICENSES, HABITAT AMENDMENT

By Melissa Waterman

Despite snowstorms and severe cold, the seven lobster zone councils met during the month of February. Council representatives discussed a multitude of topics, including double tagging in zones A and B, the June 1 start date of the Arctic Operations Handbook published in December, 2013. They involve air temperature, sea temperature, and wind velocity. When air temperature is lower than the freezing point of sea water (around 28.4°F), water temperature lower than 46.5°F, and wind speed is 19.4 knots or more, the risk of icing is high. For example, on February 20 shortly after 1:50 p.m., I retrieved the information at buoy 44005 (Gulf of Maine 78 NM east of Portsmouth, NH). The wind speed was 21 knots, air temperature 18.1°F, and water temperature 40.3°F. I then retrieved the information from the Bar Harbor buoy ATGM1. The wind speed there was 17.1 knots, air temperature 14.5°F and water temperature 30.9°F. While the air and water temperatures meet the requirements for risk of icing given above, the wind speed at 17.1 knots is less than the 19.4 knots mentioned above.

To check my assumption that icing would occur nevertheless in both these locations, I computed the likelihood of icing using James Overland’s equation for icing at near-freezing sea water temperatures (the acronym for which is PPR). For the Gulf of Maine off Portland, New Hampshire, the prediction was “Moderate Icing” (PPR=34) and for Bar Harbor, the prediction was “Extreme Icing” (PPR=83). “Moderate” icing is the term given to ice accretion at the rate of 0.3-0.8 inches per hour. “Extreme icing” is the term used for ice accretion greater than 1.6 inches per hour. Both these situations would be considered serious and would require constant chipping to stay ahead of the ice buildup.

An interesting website with easy-to-use plots that will help you approximate your risk for icing can be found at www.met.nps.edu/~psquest/polarmet/ves塞尔/predict.html. Some algorithms for determining risk are different from others. Consequently, the labels such as “light icing” or “moderate icing” associated with the risk numbers vary from algorithm to algorithm.

As mentioned above, ice has weight. There are specific numbers that are used by stability experts when they perform the required stability tests on boats over 79 feet in length. For horizontal surfaces, the stability test uses 3.07 lbs/sq. ft. to represent the weight of 1.3 inches of ice. For vertical surfaces the stability test

Continued on page 18

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GUEST COLUMN:
Think about ice before you head out

GUEST COLUMN: Think about ice before you head out

By Ann Backus, MS

We certainly have had more than our share of snow, ice and cold in 2015. Although lobstering is not as intensive a fishing activity in the winter as is groundfishing or scalloping, nonetheless those lobstermen who do fish have to go off-shore for their catch and are likely to encounter some major wind, cold temperatures and precipitation. This winter has been particularly challenging in terms of coastal and ocean storms and probably has required off-shore lobstermen to plan trips carefully and strategize as to storm path and intensity. Iceing can be a threatening hazard to lobstermen and to those who outfit their lobster boats for scalloping. First, ice adds weight, thus raising the center of gravity; weight added to a scallop rigging, which is high above the deck, changes the vessel’s center of gravity markedly.

For those who carry EPIRBs and/or life rafts, ice can encase the EPIRB and life raft rendering them non-functional. This was presumed to be what happened to the F/V Lady of Grace on March 15, 2015. This 36-foot vessel is owned by the fishermen and is a Joint Venture between Rockland and Fryeburg. The crew were fishing on a scallop trip in the Gulf of Maine when they encountered ice. Ice accumulations eventually encased both the EPIRB and life raft, rendering them non-functional. The search for the vessel and its crew continued through March 18. The five crew members were eventually located and rescued from a 40-foot raft rendering them non-functional. This was presumed to be what happened to the F/V Lady of Grace on March 15, 2015. This 36-foot vessel is owned by the fishermen and is a Joint Venture between Rockland and Fryeburg. The crew were fishing on a scallop trip in the Gulf of Maine when they encountered ice. Ice accumulations eventually encased both the EPIRB and life raft, rendering them non-functional. The search for the vessel and its crew continued through March 18. The five crew members were eventually located and rescued from a 40-foot raft.

Ann Backus is the Director of Outreach, Department of Environmental Health, Harvard University School of Public Health. Photo courtesy of A. Backus.
2015 TAX TIME COULD BE TENSE

By Melissa Waterman

The deadline for signing up for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has come and gone. Now comes tax time! For lobstermen who enrolled in a health insurance plan through the ACA in 2014, completing a federal tax return this year may be a bit stressful. Why? Because you may have to pay back money that the government provided as a subsidy against the cost of that health insurance.

"The subsidy came in the form of a tax credit for each month you had insurance," explained April Gilmore McNutt, Maine Lobstermen’s Association health insurance Navigator. "If you made more money than you thought you would last year, that affects the amount of subsidy you qualify for."

Lobstermen often don’t know how much money they will make in a year until the fishing season is over and the traps are in the backyard. Take, for example, lobsterman John Doe. John generally starts setting traps in late May and early June. His 800 traps are all out by July. When early fall comes John starts to move those traps offshore. If the weather is good, he continues to fish through November, sometimes through December. Come January of the next year, he sits down and calculates his income from the season.

That income depends on many things: the temperature of the water, the timing of the lobster molt, the varying costs of fuel, bait and equipment repairs, and of course, the price paid for his lobsters at the dock. While some lobstermen keep track of those costs on a monthly basis and have a good idea of where they stand in terms of income, many lobstermen don’t.

So when it comes to stating his income in order to complete the application for health insurance through the ACA in 2014, John Doe must estimate. And what does he base his estimate on? Likely his most recent income taxes.

"If you made more money than you thought you would last year, that affects the amount of subsidy you qualify for."

Lobster landings hit a record in 2012, with more than 127 million pounds landed. The price, however, tanked. John Doe may have had a pretty poor year in 2012, despite hauling more lobsters than ever before. Not knowing his final 2013 income, he probably gave a conservative estimate when filling out his health insurance application.

To make health insurance affordable for those who fall within certain income guidelines, the ACA provides for a subsidy in the form of an advance premium tax credit to participants. The amount of subsidy is based on one’s income and family size relative to the federal poverty level. A person can elect to convey the total of that subsidy directly to his or her insurance company or take it as a monthly credit against the cost of the health insurance policy.

The problem comes when it’s time to pay the tax man. Unsure what to estimate for the coming year, John Doe based his estimated 2013 income on what he made in 2012. But as it turned out, 2013 was a pretty good year and 2014 even better, with landings remaining high and the price per pound way up. John’s income was much more than he had anticipated.

If John had updated his enrollment information on the federal Web site (www.healthcare.gov) or through the healthcare.gov call center before December 31, 2014, to more accurately reflect his final income, his subsidy would have been recalculated. But, like most of us, he did not meet that deadline. So now it’s March and he’s beginning to fill out his federal income tax return only to find...
were lobbying for management of the Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) inshore fishery operating in state waters. Lobster had long been under the jurisdiction of the New England Fishery Management Council, state and regional levels, and continuing meetings dedicated to managing lobster. Lobster management in the eastern states was shared among the eastern states. 

At the same time, Wilson was exploring all that wasn’t known about lobsters: where they went during the winter months, migratory patterns, settlement and distribution of the young. It was a new adventure for Wilson who took enthusiastically to diving along the Maine coast in search of lobsters.

At the same time, change was rippling throughout the world of lobster management. Lobster had long been under the jurisdiction of the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC). But, given that lobster fishing at that time was primarily an inshore fishery operating in state waters, organizations such as the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) were lobbying for management authority to move to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), which regulates fisheries shared among the eastern states.

Pat White, executive director of the MLA at the time, recognized that there was a real need for lobstermen and scientists to work together to gather crucial data on lobster. “Pat lobbyist Maine Sea Grant to create a research assistant position with Bob. That pretty much led me to graduate school,” Wilson explained. He attended the University of Maine to study marine science while continuing his work with Bob Steneck. That work sent Wilson not only underwa- ter to sample lobsters but to numerous meetings dedicated to managing lobsters.

“There was a lot of excitement around the zone councils,” Wilson said. Lobster management in the state had become decentralized in 1996, when seven lobster zones were created on the coast and DMR ceded authority to set trap limits and fishing times to those councils. Wilson attended meetings at the zone counci l, state and regional levels, and continued his work collaborating with lobstermen to learn more about the life cycle of lobsters. “It was a great opportunity to immerse myself in basic ecological research and to work with lobstermen. We were doing sea sampling along the coast and then, through the Penobscot Bay Project, throughout Pen Bay.” He received his master’s degree from the University of Maine in 1999. Meanwhile, Jay Crouse, DMR’s long-time lobster biologist, had retired. Diane Cowan, founder of The Lobster Conservancy, held Crouse’s position briefly before returning to her work in the Conservancy. Linda Mercer, director of the Bureau of Marine Sciences, thought Wilson might be just right for the position.

“Lobsters are an addiction that’s hard to drop.”

“I really owe a tremendous amount to Pat [White] and Dave Cousins [president of the MLA]. They were extremely encouraging to me when I started,” Wilson said. Wilson began his new position at a time when lobster landings were doing well but resource managers thought the resource was due for a correction. A lobster assessment model used at the time was based on the number of eggs per lobster recruited into the fishery and that model said egg production was down way. “The science they used said that there was a problem, that lobster in the Gulf of Maine was overfished. Lobstermen didn’t think so and there was a lot of controversy,” Wilson said.

With support from Mercer, Wilson started building an interconnected science program to meet the needs of both lobstermen and resource managers. His plan was straightforward: to track Maine’s lobster population throughout all life stages. He expanded the agency’s sea sampling program, begun in 1985, into a large-scale effort, linking hundreds of lobstermen with sea samplers each summer. DMR provided funding for the lobster settlement index, begun by University of Maine researcher Rick Wahle in 1989, and expanded the index to all zones of the coast. Wilson organized a versatile trap sampling program, which provides data on the full range of lobsters found on the bottom. The twice-yearly coast-wide trawl survey began in 2000. That program had a few bumps at the beginning. “Lobstermen in one zone didn’t want us out there,” Wilson said dryly. “We went out and they escorted us in.”

Now, fifteen years after he began as the agency’s lobster biologist, Wilson is starting a new phase of his career. “Lobsters are an addiction that’s hard to drop. It’s the underlying uncertainty of what the resource and the environment are doing that’s really interesting to me. I think we really need to go back to the drawing board on lobster biology,” Wilson said. That means is throwing out assumptions about lobster based on data gathered in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s because, Wilson argues, they do not reflect what is happening now. “That’s the question, what’s the new normal?” Lobstermen are in a great place right now, but a precarious place and we have to be in a vigilant state,” he cautioned.

In Wilson’s mind, there is an art both to lobstering and to the pursuit of science. Each person forms a hypothesis about something, sets out to test that hypothesis through experiment, analyzes the results and then alters the experiment. “I firmly believe that a lobsterman and a scientist are two creatures that are very close to being similar. They simply operate in different areas,” Wilson said.

“During the last couple of years [at DMR] my responsibilities changed,” Wilson said, reflecting on his decision to apply for the director’s position. “I started supervising work on scallops, urchins, shrimp and crab. It opened up different exposures for me. But the fundamental training that Steneck and my lab mates fostered has really carried me through and it applies to my new job.”

As the Marine Sciences Bureau director, Wilson is now in charge of 70 staff, a multi-million-dollar budget, and bureaucratic complexities he did not face in his earlier position. For the next six months, he anticipates spending a lot of time “soaking it all in,” as he puts it. “Now I’m the least knowledgeable person in the room. It’s a little bit of a kick in the shins!”

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NEW CLIMATE MODELS PREDICT WARMER GULF OF MAINE

By Melissa Waterman

When it comes to portraying increasing global air and water temperatures, bigger has been the norm. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) produces global climate Assessment Reports regularly; five have come out since 1990. These Assessments give an overview of projected changes in the world’s climate and are produced through collaboration among thousands of scientists throughout the world. Those scientists use large clusters of computers to model the world’s atmosphere, land, ice, and sea in order to project what may happen in the future as additional amounts of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, enter the atmosphere.

The proportion of Gulf Stream slope water that enters the Gulf of Maine will steadily increase with continued climate change, leading to a warmer, saltier Gulf of Maine.

But bigger is not always better, according to Dr. Vincent Saba, a Research Fisheries Biologist with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s Ecosystem Assessment Program. “These climate change reports are based on global models,” Saba explained. “They operate on a big scale.”

While it may seem large to those who fish in it, the Gulf of Maine actually comprises a very small portion of the Atlantic Ocean. Because of its relatively small size, many of the low-resolution models used to project the effects of climate change may not be useful when applied to the Gulf.

“I explain it as the difference between a standard old-fashioned TV and the new hi-definition TV. The hi-def TV is crystal clear due to its high resolution,” Saba said. “However, the IPCC assessment is based on low-resolution climate models that cannot reproduce a crystal clear Gulf of Maine.”

Saba and his colleagues at the NOAA Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory are analyzing these new, high-resolution global climate models to assess their accuracy. “They operate on a small scale,” Saba explained. “Thay are analyzing these new, high-resolution global climate models to assess their accuracy. I have more confidence in the high-resolution climate models than in these coarse models. Thay are analyzing these new, high-resolution global climate models to assess their accuracy. I have more confidence in the high-resolution climate models than in these coarse models.”

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Saba wants to know what will happen to water temperatures in the Gulf of Maine over the next century. “In the models, atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations are increased by 1% per year, which effectively doubles CO₂ by the end of the century. That’s pretty much business as usual. What we see is that in 70 to 80 years, water temperatures in the Gulf of Maine become 1.5 to 3°C warmer than what the coarser models project by the end of this century. Keep in mind that those models [presented in the IPCC Assessment Reports] project about a 3°C increase. So this would be another 1.5 to 3°C on top of that.”

That warming, Saba emphasized, would take place throughout the water column, not just at the surface, and in some areas of the Gulf, bottom waters may warm faster than surface waters.

In part, that future warming will come from a higher frequency of warm and salty Gulf Stream Slope water intrusions through the Northeast Channel. According to Saba, the high-resolution climate models suggest that the proportion of Gulf Stream Slope water that enters the Gulf of Maine will steadily increase with continued climate change, leading to a warmer, saltier Gulf of Maine.

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Finally, it is not only the vessels that we are worried about this year, but the ice in the harbors and the trouble that spells for harbors, marinas, and the ability even to leave the harbor to undertake a fishing trip.

The bottom line: It is always important to monitor weather conditions constantly. In terms of the risk of icing, it is equally important to closely monitor the air and water temperatures and wind speed in latitudes north of 38°N. Air temperatures and wind speed can vary greatly from hour to hour and location to location. For more information you can download the chapter at www.arctic-operations-handbook.info.
Coalition continued from page 1

However, Richard Charter, a senior fellow at The Ocean Foundation, a national organization that opposes offshore drilling, said the governor’s move to join the coalition could embolden the oil and natural gas industry to again target a region it has long coveted. “This is a dangerous path for the governor to be following if anyone cares about the Gulf of Maine,” said Charter, who has worked to oppose offshore drilling for 35 years.

Charter said the Obama administration’s lease project is in its infancy, meaning it’s possible that it could be changed or expanded if a governor supported it. He noted that the U.S. House of Representatives passed several bills in the last session that would have allowed governors to re-enter their state’s coastal waters absolutely has an effect on the (White House) as to where they consider drilling or an effect on the Congress.”

“While a governor advocates for his or her coastal waters absolutely has an effect on the (White House) as to where they consider drilling or an effect on the Congress,” said Charter. He noted that one of the reasons the North Atlantic and Pacific regions were exempted from the Obama administration’s lease project is because officials in those states had united to oppose offshore drilling.

Pressing for expanded access Environmentalists have fought to limit offshore oil exploration and drilling because of the use of seismic testing, in which explosives are detonated to locate oil and gas deposits, as well as the threat of widespread damage from spills. The signature catastrophe in offshore drilling has been the Deepwater Horizon well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. The largest marine oil spill in the nation’s history — the blowout released an estimated 4.1 million barrels of crude into the gulf — continues to have environmental impacts. At a conference on the spill’s effects this week in Houston, researchers presented data showing that marine life was killed throughout a 1,500-square-mile area, affecting whales and other creatures, according to the Houston Chronicle.

LePage voiced support for offshore oil drilling during the 2010 Republican gubernatorial primary. He was heavily criticized for that by environmental groups and his opponents in the election.

Dylan Voorhees, the clean energy and global warming director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine, said it was “fitting and ironic” that the governor would support offshore drilling. Voorhees noted that the LePage administration has worked hard to oppose renewable energy development in Maine, including its efforts in 2013 to scuttle an offshore wind project by the Norwegian company Statoil. “Now he’s working with a group that wants to do offshore oil and gas,” he said. “It’s absurd.”

Voorhees said Maine public officials had historically opposed any effort that would lead to offshore drilling. He’s hoping that the tradition will continue in spite of LePage.

“Historically it’s been a non-starter, and for good reasons,” he said. “Our economy is based on fisheries and tourism, all of which is incompatible with offshore oil drilling. … I would like to think (drilling) is an unlikely scenario.”

Jobs and energy security are two reasons Gin. LePage joined the coalition. Photo by M. Young.
LOBSTERMEN, RESEARCHERS STUDYING BAROTRAUMA IN FISH

By Sarah Paquette

Chances are you have heard about the dangers divers face when they return to the water surface too quickly. The change in pressure creates bubbles of gas that form inside a diver’s body causing what is commonly known as the bends or decompression sickness. But did you know that fish can suffer from a similar problem?

Most bony fish have a gas-filled organ called the swim bladder that helps maintain buoyancy. When the swim bladder has too much gas inside it, some fish are able to “burp” to allow excess gas to escape. However, both cod and cusk have a closed-off air bladder controlled by a gas gland and require hours to release the built-up gas. When cod or cusk are pulled up to the surface, for example, in a lobster trap, the rapid change in pressure can inflate their swim bladders, causing barotrauma (literally “pressure trauma”). “They look like fish balloons,” said University of Maine doctoral student Robert Boenish. “The air in the swim bladder expands with the reduction in pressure. It could rupture or expand so much that it pushes other organs out of the body,” he explained.

Boenish and fellow graduate student Jocelyn Runnebaum want to know if cusk and cod can survive recompression by using lobster traps to return the fish to depth. Runnebaum started the project in 2013 with a focus on cusk. Cusk is listed as a species of concern by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and is under status review through the Endangered Species Act, she said. Cusk are not a commercially important species and therefore are not managed under the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC). “There isn’t much data on cusk. They are rarely caught during surveys and are considered a rare fish,” she said. Cusk have been under internal review by NOAA since 2007 to determine their population status.

Runnebaum hopes the data she and Boenish collect will be useful to the process. Their project has been able to expand beyond cusk to include cod after they received a Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant from NOAA.

“Th e air in the swim bladder expands to determine if it is still there and if it is alive or not. For cusk, the next step is to work with industry to determine other methods of recompression, aside from using lobster traps. Cod research will begin this spring to investigate how they respond to recompression, since they are affected by barotrauma differently than cusk. “With talk about closures earlier this year, the status of cod has been a touchy subject. The stock assessment assumes that the discard mortality rate for cod is 100%, we can show that it’s below 100%, that would reduce the chance of closures and reduced quotas,” Boenish explained.

Runnebaum emphasized that this research is still in the preliminary stages and that they are continually looking to answer questions posed by the fishing industry. At the February Maine Lobstermen’s Association directors meeting, Boenish and Runnebaum presented information about their research and asked for thoughts from the directors. “The MLA board was very helpful and had good feedback. It’s always good to get anecdotal evidence from the industry,” commented Boenish. “We are hoping to find more fishermen to be involved with this research to get samples from different types of environments. We greatly value the involvement of lobstermen and think it is important to have continued industry involvement throughout this research,” said Runnebaum.

For more information about barotrauma or how to become involved in this research, visit the project website at http://umaine.edu/umaineskdiscard-project.

Cusk and other groundfish suffer decompression when brought up in lobster traps. Researchers are studying ways to reduce fish mortality from the process. Photo courtesy of J. Runnebaum.
Please join us at the Fishermen’s Forum on MARCH 6 FROM 10:30 A.M. TO NOON to find out how marketing will support the Maine Lobster industry over the next four years.

MLMC Executive Director Matt Jacobson and representatives from Maine Lobster’s new global marketing firm, Weber Shandwick, will provide insight into the new plan to increase demand for Maine Lobster.

**WHAT** MLMC’s Annual Report to the Industry  
**WHERE** Samoset Resort, Rockport Room  
**WHEN** Friday from 10:30 a.m. – noon
Chinese New Year, which took place in February this year, is on the verge of becoming Maine’s second-biggest lobster shipping week of the year, behind the week of Christmas and New Year’s Eve, according to industry officials.

China imports lobsters from Canada, Australia, South Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere, but the market for the U.S. variety is exploding, with the demand strong year-round, not just at New Year’s. Federal export statistics show that American exports of live or processed lobster to China climbed from $2.1 million in 2009 to $90.5 million in 2014. China bought about 12% of U.S. lobster exports in 2014, up from 0.6% in 2009.

A state panel on ocean acidification has published a study in February showing that American exports of live or processed lobster to China climbed from $2.1 million in 2009 to $90.5 million in 2014. China bought about 12% of U.S. lobster exports in 2014, up from 0.6% in 2009.

**OCEAN ACIDIFICATION FOCUS OF PROPOSED BOND MEASURE**

A state panel on ocean acidification wants the state to borrow $3 million so scientists can collect data on increasing ocean acidity along the Maine coast and its impact on key tourism drivers such as the Maine lobster. The panel spent several months last fall studying published science on carbon dioxide emissions and in February released its recommendations on how the state should address the problem. Among those suggestions is creation of an existing Ocean Acidification Council to address impacts of ocean acidification on Maine’s commercial marine species.

**PARASITE IN GREEN CRABS AFFECTS LOBSTERS**

A parasite found in green crab is causing some concern among Nova Scotia lobster buyers after research showed the parasite can be transferred to live lobsters caught in traps using green crab as bait. Researchers at Dalhousie University and the University of Prince Edward Island published a study in February showing normally found only in green crabs, was found in significant numbers of lobsters caught using green crab bait. The scientists said the parasite affects the lobster’s behavior, making it more susceptible to predators. It does not affect humans, however, or the taste of lobster meat.

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Lobster continued from page 1

than $7.5 million. Added to the overall landed value, the bonus figure brings the total to more than $464 million.

“During the 2014 season we saw a perfect mix of conditions for economic improvement in the Maine lobster fishery,” said Patrick Keliher, DMR commissioner. “Not only were landings at an historic high again, a more predictably timed shed improved industry’s ability to manage the supply.”

Unlike the 2012 season when an early shed created a supply of new shell lobsters that exceeded demand and depressed value, the shed in 2014 happened later, allowing processors, dealers, and restaurants to handle them more profitably.

“Another significant reason for the improved value for Maine’s lobster this past year is the effort of Maine’s lobster dealers who worked hard to expand markets for Maine lobster,” said Commissioner Keliher. That work will continue as the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative begins working with global marketing powerhouse Weber Shandwick to grow markets for this sustainably harvested Maine seafood.”

Irvine continued from page 3

“Measures such as size limits and prohibitions on taking egg-bearing female lobsters are embraced by industry. That voluntary compliance is the backbone of the Maine lobster fishery’s success.”

“Just as important, the Maine lobster industry’s steadfast compliance with conservation laws and regulations has contributed to historic landings for a third year in a row,” said Keliher. “Measures such as size limits and prohibitions on taking egg-bearing female lobsters are embraced by industry. That voluntary compliance is the backbone of the Maine lobster fishery’s success.”

“In addition, favorable environment conditions for growth and reduced predation on small lobsters have allowed the resource to expand dramatically since the late 1980s, in particularly in eastern Maine during the last ten years,” said DMR Marine Science Bureau Director Carl Wilson. Among the indicators of lobster population health tracked by DMR, the American Lobster Settlement Index shows an improved picture for the future of the resource. “2014 marked a return to near-average levels of settlement after three successive years of low settlement, which is a favorable pattern change for the resource,” said Wilson.

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**Taxes continued from page 16**

that, based on the difference between what he estimated he would make in 2014 and what he actually did make, he must return some of the subsidy money to the government.

How much John will have to repay is based on how far from his original estimate his 2014 income is and how far his income is from the federal poverty level ($11,490 for an individual and $15,510 for a family of two). If for some reason his income turns out to be 400% above the federal poverty level ($45,690 for an individual and $62,040 for a family of two) he must repay all the tax credit subsidy he received in 2014 for his health insurance. If his income turns out to be between 200% and 400% of the poverty level, he must repay up to a certain capped amount, between $750 and $2,500, depending on his family status.

If John Doe did not sign up for health insurance at all in 2014, he will have to pay a fine, called an individual responsibility payment, on his tax return of 1% of his annual income or a flat dollar amount of $95 per person and $47.50 per child under 18, whichever is greater. For 2015, however, if he still does not have health insurance, that fine jumps to 2% of his income or $325 per person and $162.50 for each child. The payment increases each year.

“It’s difficult to estimate income in this industry. Although an explanation of how the tax credits are reconciled is part of the application process, it’s difficult to know where you land until taxes are done the following year,” McNutt said. It’s a challenge using the healthcare.gov system for self-employed people because the application requires an estimate of your annual household income for the coming year. “We’ve tried to encourage people to reassess their income estimate quarterly through the year, so if income seems to be more than predicted, an update can be made to adjust accordingly before the end of the year,” she added.
March 3
ASMFC Hearing on Northern Shrimp Public Information Document. 7-9 p.m., Urban Forestry Center, Portsmouth, NH. FMI: douglas.grout@wildlife.nh.gov.

March 5-7
Maine Fishermen’s Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport.

March 6
MLA Annual Meeting, 9 a.m., Samoset Resort, Rockport.

March 7
ASMFC Hearing on Northern Shrimp Public Information Document, 1-3 p.m., Camden Room, Samoset Resort, Rockport. FMI: terry.stockwell@maine.gov.

March 15-17
Seafood Expo North America, Boston, MA.

March 16
Maine Lobster Reception, 5-30-7 p.m., Exchange Conference Center, Boston Fish Pier. FMI: info@lobsterfrommaine.com or 207-541-9310.

March 20-21

March 30
ASMFC Hearing on Northern Shrimp Public Information Document, 6-8 p.m., Casco Bay Ferry Terminal, Portland. FMI: terry.stockwell@maine.gov.

April 1
MLA Directors’ meeting, noon, Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast. FMI: 967-4555.

April 14
Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative meeting.

April 15

April 21 - 23
NEFMC meeting, Mystic, CT. FMI: www.nefmc.org.

April 21

April 29

U.S.-Canadian Lobstermen’s Town Meeting in March

The 2015 Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting will be held in Saint John, New Brunswick, on March 20-21. This year’s Town Meeting is being held in honor and memory of Klaus Sonnenberg of Grand Manan Island, who died in a plane crash last year. The meeting will feature topics Klaus was interested in such as management of the Grey Zone and the effects of ocean acidification and climate change on eggers. This year there is free admission to the meeting for all lobstermen who have never attended a Lobstermen’s Town Meeting and for those who fish in the Grey Zone (around Machias Seal Island). The event is organized by The Lobster Institute at the University of Maine. Chief sponsors are Luke’s Lobster/Cape Seafood, Craig’s All Natural, East Coast Seafood/Paturel International, and Fishery Products/Highliner Foods.

Habitat Amendment

The NEFMC spent ten years drafting the Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment, which affects all fisheries management plans for commercially harvested species in New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Lobstermen in the zones F and G are concerned about possible closures of waters around Jeffrey’s Ledge, Cashes Ledge and Bigelow Bight. Those closures would only apply to bottom mobile tending gear targeting species like groundfish. Some fear, however, that the rules could change in the future and potentially exclude lobster gear in some of these closures, which worries lobstermen. There is also concern about the proposal to reopen a portion of the western Gulf of Maine closure to shrimping as this area has become an important winter fishing ground for many lobstermen. Any reconfiguration of existing groundfish closures would lead to significant gear conflict.

Steve Taylor, a zone G council member, doesn’t want to see any portion of Jeffrey’s Ledge off-limits to lobstering. “Lobstermen are tending more and more to go there, offshore, because the lobsters are going out there,” he said. “It’s closed to druggers now so you don’t have much gear loss.” Approximately 30 lobstermen fish in the area around Jeffrey’s Ledge, so any closure would have a significant effect in the two zones. While the zone F and G councils did not take any official action to register their discomfort, the members clearly are anxious to “stay on top of it,” as Taylor put it.

U.S.-Canadian Lobstermen’s Town Meeting in March

The 2015 Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting will be held in Saint John, New Brunswick, on March 20-21. This year’s Town Meeting is being held in honor and memory of Klaus Sonnenberg of Grand Manan Island, who died in a plane crash last year. The meeting will feature topics Klaus was interested in such as management of the Grey Zone and the effects of ocean acidification and climate change on eggers. This year there is free admission to the meeting for all lobstermen who have never attended a Lobstermen’s Town Meeting and for those who fish in the Grey Zone (around Machias Seal Island). The event is organized by The Lobster Institute at the University of Maine. Chief sponsors are Luke’s Lobster/Cape Seafood, Craig’s All Natural, East Coast Seafood/Paturel International, and Fishery Products/Highliner Foods.

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Events Calendar

TRI-COUNTY LITERACY
Serving Lincoln, Sagadahoc, and northern Cumberland Counties
Improve your skills in reading, math, writing, and computer literacy.
Free and confidential.
207-443-6384
literacyvolunteers@tricountyliteracy.org
34 Wing Farm Pkwy, Bath, ME 04530

Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative meeting.
Looking for live crab and lobster supply for the 2015 season.

The winter of 2015 is in the record books for many towns along Maine’s coast. The ocean turns to ice when the water temperature is approximately 29º F. The sub-zero temperatures throughout February caused ice to form in dozens of harbors, locking in those fishing vessels still on their moorings. These pictures show the Friendship harbor frozen solid from the shore to Friendship Long Island. Photos by Beth Birmingham, courtesy of the Courier-Gazette newspaper.

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